THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER

AND BY THE

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II. CHRONICLES

Exposition and Homiletics

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VICAR OF RUISHTON

Homilies by Various Authors

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NEW EDITION

WILCOX & FOLLETT CO., CHICAGO, *Publishers*

This Book Is Manufactured Under Wartime Conditions In Conformity With All Government Regulations Controlling the Use of Paper and Other Materials.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY J. J. LITTLE & IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

THE

SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES.

INTRODUCTION.

The Second Book of Chronicles is occupied with the reign, works, and career of Solomon, and with the history of the separate kingdom of Judah, omitting altogether the connected history of that of Israel. It goes down to the memorable proclamation of Cyrus, which authorized the return of the captives and sanctioned the rebuilding of the temple. This book embraces the third and fourth divisions of the whole work, once entitled in its unity Chronicles, according to the very obvious fourfold arrangement of it, observed by so many expositors of this historical portion of the Old Testament. The *third* division, occupied with the reign of Solomon, fills ch. i.—ix. And the *fourth* division, occupied with the history of the successive reigns of the separate kingdom of Judah, fills ch. x.—xxxvi. 21. The arrangement of this book, therefore, in parts and sections, with dates of reigns and the synchronisms for them (according to Milman's table) in the line of Israel, so long as it lasted, will be as follows :—

Arrangement of 2 Chronicles in Parts and Sections.

Part I. Ch. i.—ix. *Solomon and his reign.*

His burnt offerings at Gibeon; the vision granted to him, and his prayer; his wisdom, wealth, chariots, and horsemen. Ch. i.

His determination to build the temple, and preparations for it. Ch. ii.

The building of the temple, with its plan, measures, chief features, ornaments. Ch. iii.—v. 1.

The dedication of the temple. Ch. v. 2—vii.

Other buildings, arrangements of labour between "tributaries" and "rulers;" restored appointments of priests and Levites; and the ships given or lent for help by Hiram. Ch. viii.

The visit and testimony of the Queen of Sheba; the ivory throne of Solomon; his riches and prosperity and presents; his wide dominion, length of reign, and at last death. Ch. ix.

Part II. Ch. x.—xxxvi. 21. *The dissension and schism in the kingdom,* with the separate history of that division of it which held the capital and the temple and the unbroken succession of David.

The revolt of Jeroboam, and secession of the ten tribes. Ch. x.

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		Elah	932
		Zimri	930
		Ahab	919
Jehoshaphat: ch. xvii.—xxi. 3...	918		
		Ahaziah	897
		Jehoram	895
Jehoram, or Joram: ch. xxi. ...	893		
Ahaziah: ch. xxii. 1—9 ...	885		
Athaliah: ch. xxii. 10—xxiii. 15	884	Jehu	884
Jehoash: ch. xxiii. 11—xxiv. ...	878		
		Jehoahaz	855
		Jehoash	841
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Uzziah (Azariah): ch. xxvi. ...	809		
		Interregnum	781
		Zechariah and Shallum	770
		Menahem	769
		Pekahiah	759
		Pekah...	758
Jotham: ch. xxvii.	757		
Ahaz: ch. xxviii.	741		
		Interregnum (second)	737
		Hoshea	728
Hezekiah: ch. xxix.—xxxii. ...	726		
		Samaria taken ...	719
Manasseh: ch. xxxiii. 1—20 ...	697		
Amon: 20—25... ...	642		
Josiah: ch. xxxiv., xxxv. ...	640		
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Jehoiachin: 9, 10	598		
Zedekiah: 11—17	598		
The Captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem: ch. xxxvi. 17—21	587		
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THE

SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1—ch. ix. 31.—The Career of Solomon as King of the United Kingdom is here commenced, covering the ground to the end of ch. ix. The same period is described in 1 Kings i.—xi. And the following table of parallel passages (as given by Keil) may be put here for convenient reference:—

2 Chron. i. 2—13.	1 Kings iii. 4—15.
i. 14—17.	x. 26—29.
ii.	v. 15—32.
iii. 1—v. 1.	vi., vii. 13—51.
v. 2—vii. 10.	viii.
vii. 11—22.	ix. 1—9.
viii.	ix. 10—28.
ix. 1—12, 13—28.	x. 1—13, 14—29.
ix. 29—31.	xi. 41—43.

The present chapter of seventeen verses tells (1) of Solomon's sacrifice at "the high place of Gibeon," whither he was accompanied by "all the congregation" (vers. 1—6). Next (2) of the vision given to him that same night, with his prayer and the answer vouchsafed to it (vers. 7—12). And lastly, (3) of the wealth and the signs of it which became his thereupon (vers. 13—17).

Vers. 1—6.—*Solomon's sacrifice.*

Ver. 1.—**Was strengthened in his kingdom.** This expression, or one very closely resembling it, is frequently found both in Chronicles and elsewhere, so far as the English Version is concerned. But the verb in its present form (hithp. conjugation) is found in Chronicles, omitting other books, just fifteen times, and rarely, if ever, falls to the level of the mere passive voice. It carries rather the idea of a person who exerts himself, and does all that in him lies to *nerve himself* with strength for any object (1 Chron. xi. 10; xix. 13; ch. xii. 13; xiii. 7, 8, 21; xv. 8; xvi. 9; xvii. 1; xxi. 4; xxiii. 1; xxv. 11; xxvii. 6; xxxii. 5). It may suggest to us that Solomon threw the force of moral energy and resolution into his work and life at this period. **The Lord his God was with him;** *i.e.* Jehovah his God was with him. The parallels of this very simple and natural expression are too numerous for quotation. Some of the earliest are found in well-known connections in the Book of Genesis, as *e.g.* xxi. 22; xxvi. 28; xxviii. 15, 20; xxxi. 3. Again, Numb. xiv. 14, 43; xxiii. 21; Josh. xiv. 12; Judg. vi. 13; Ruth ii. 4; 1 Sam. xvii. 37; 2 Sam. v. 10; 1 Chron. xi. 9; xxii. 11, 16; ch. xv. 9; xix. 11; xxxvi. 23; Amos v. 14. The beautiful New Testament equivalent occurs in 2 Thess. iii. 16, and elsewhere. Like some other of those earliest concisest religious expressions, brevity and simplicity are fully charged with suggestion. And the above quotations will be found to furnish examples of the manifold practical use of the Lord's *presence* with any one. That presence may infer the help just of companionship, or of sure sympathy, or of needed counsel, or of strength in the hour of temptation, or of absolute practical help, or of the highest revealings of faith. The whole circle of need, of human and Christian need, the Divine presence "will supply" (Phil. iv. 19). The "need" of Solomon in his present position was patent and pressing. Would that he had always kept by the true supply of it! **Magnified him exceedingly.** This verb in its piel conjugation, signifying "to make grow," occurs twenty-six times in the various books of the Old Testament, some of the more characteristic occurrences of it being found in the following passages: Gen. xii. 2; Numb vi. 5; Josh. iii. 7; iv. 17; 1 Kings i. 37, 47; 2 Kings x. 6; 1 Chron. xxix. 12, 25; Esth. iii. 1; Job vii. 17; Ps. xxxiv. 4; lxix. 31; Isa. i. 2; xliv. 14; Ezek. xxxi. 4; Dan. i. 5; Hos. ix. 12.

Ver. 2.—This verse and the following four supersede the one verse, 1 Kings iii. 4; and the five together give us, of course, a much fuller view of the events of the sacrifice. Our present verse purports to show the *representative* components of "all Israel" in a fourfold classification. **Captains of thousands and of hundreds** (see first 1 Chron. xiii. 1; xxvii. 1; xxviii. 1; and then Exod. xviii. 21, 25; Numb. xxxi. 14, 48, 52, 54; Deut. i. 15; 1 Sam. viii. 12; xvii. 18; xviii. 13; xxii. 7; 2 Sam. xviii. 1; 2 Kings xi. 9, 15, 19). **The judges.** The office and the person of the judge were held in high honour among the Jewish people from the first, and perhaps, also, with a noteworthy uniformity, even in the more degenerate periods of their history. Their commencement in patriarchal simplicity can be easily imagined, and receives illustration from such passages as Job xxix. 7, 8, 9; xxxii. 9. Their more formal development may be considered to date from the crisis related in Exod. xviii. 14—24. And the allusions to the judge and his office thenceforward sustain our impression of the honour in which they were held, arising, no doubt, largely from the deep-felt necessity for them, the more society crystallized (Numb. xxv. 5; Deut. xvi. 18; xix. 17; xxi. 2; Josh. viii. 33; 1 Chron. xxiii. 24; xxvi. 29; ch. xix. 8—10). In 1 Chron. xxiii. 24 we are told how David set apart "six thousand Levites" to be "officers and judges." **Every governor.** The word employed here (נָשִׂיא) is rendered by five different words in our Authorized Version: "prince" (Gen. xvii. 20, *passim*), "ruler" (Exod. xvi. 22, *passim*), "captain" (Numb. ii. 3, *passim*), "chief" (iii. 24, *passim*), and "governor" in the present passage only. It is evidently a term of generic signification, used of a king (1 Kings xi. 34; Ezek. xii. 10); of leaders of the Ishmaelites (Gen. xvii. 20); of the captains of the tribes of Israel (Numb. vii. 11); of the chiefs of families (Numb. iii. 24); while the use of it (Gen. xxiii. 6) to set forth the position of Abraham as one raised to eminence so high and undisputed that it might be clearly said to be God's doing, is sufficient to determine its *central* signification. **The chief of the fathers**; *i.e.* the heads of the fathers. The first occurrence of the expression, "the heads of their fathers' houses" (Exod. vi. 14), and of "the heads *of the fathers* of the Levites according to their families" (Exod. vi. 25), sufficiently explains the original and perfectly natural meaning of the phrase. The great importance and significance of the position of the heads "of families" and "of houses" and "of fathers" in early patriarchal times must necessarily have declined by the time of Solomon, when the nation had received so much more of civil form and system. But the name remained, and the family and social position did not fail to make themselves felt, and finally the *official* recognition of them in David's time is evidenced by 1 Chron. xxvii. 1, and in Solomon's time both by the present passage and ch. v. 2 with its parallel 1 Kings viii. 1. Our present use of the expression ought probably to show it, in close apposition with the foregoing words, "to all Israel" (wrongly translated "*in* all Israel" in the Authorized Version), and which itself is a repetition of the "to all Israel" in the beginning of the verse. Although the existing Hebrew pointing of the verse does not favour the supposition, it may be that the writer means to emphasize Solomon's summons as made both to the kingdom as such, and to the people also as a united people. We are not, indeed, told here, in so many words, what it was that Solomon said "to all Israel." But there can be no doubt as to his object, as betrayed in the first clause of the following verse.

Ver. 3.—**All the congregation**; *i.e.* in the persons of their captains, judges, princes, and family representatives. **The high place . . . at Gibeon.** It may readily be allowed that even nature and instinct would suggest a certain fitness in selecting *high* places, and the impressive grandeur of groves, for the worship of the High and Lofty One and for the offerings of sacrifice to him. It was not otherwise historically (Gen. xii. 7, 8; xxii. 3, 4; xxxi. 54). However, *first*, it was part of the education of a nation (situated in the heart of the young world) in the unity of the one God, that its worship should be offered in *one* place, and the smoke of its sacrifices ascend from *one* altar; and *secondly*, it was not difficult to foresee that the very force that lay in the associations, which dictated the choice of *some* places (not least, certainly, "the grove"), would constitute their weakness and snare. The prohibitions, therefore, of the Mosaic Law (Deut. xii. 5, 11, 14, 19, 21, 26), witnessed to by such corroborations as are found in commands to obliterate certain Canaanitish traces, that looked long time a different way (Lev. xvii. 3; xxvi. 30; Numb. xxxiii. 52; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Josh. xxii. 29; 1 Kings xx. 23), approve themselves as in thorough harmony with what all would feel to be the genius of the religious education of Israel, and, through Israel, of the nations of the world. The wonder that impresses us is rather that means were not found to abide by the "letter" of the Law to a far greater degree during all the generations that elapsed before the people were settled in their land, and were gathered in their temple so typical. Is it not possible to regard this as an impressive instance of how, even in a system that sought to be of the closest and most exclusive, the "*spirit*," by force of circumstances, resented the tyrannous bondage of the "letter"? Anyway, for ages from the time of that prohibition, the nation had the moral principle as their guide rather than any possibility of keeping safe within a commandment's "letter" (so see Judg. vi. 25, 26; xiii. 17—24; 1 Sam. vii. 10; xiii. 9; xvi. 5; x. 5; 1 Chron. xxi. 26; 1 Kings xviii. 30). Even now, accordingly, the prohibited is still the observed, and by Solomon, too, in the steps of David, even if it be necessary to describe it as the "winked at." And to the "high place" at Gibeon Solomon and all the representatives, *the congregation* of Israel, have to repair in order to do sacrifice. The tabernacle was now at Gibeon, whither it had come from Nob (1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40; 1 Sam. xxi. 1, 6; from which latter reference, speaking of the "shewbread," it comes that we know the tabernacle to have resided at Nob awhile; for the circumstance is not positively narrated in any passage of the history (but see also 1 Sam. xxii. 9, 11). *Gibeon* was one of the four Hivite cities, the other three being Beeroth, Chephirah, and Kirjath-jearim. It had its first fame from its "wiliness" (Josh. ix. 3, 4, etc.). By the directest road, it was five miles distant from Jerusalem, in the direction of the sea. It was further noted for the encounter between Joab and Abner (2 Sam. ii. 12—17). Again, for the slaying of Amasa by Joab (2 Sam. xx. 6—10), and for the death of Joab himself at the hand of Benaiah, at the very horns of the altar (1 Kings ii. 28—34). Although the exact date of the lodging of the tabernacle at Gibeon is not told us, nor even the person who was answerable for bringing it there, yet there can be no reasonable doubt that it was David, as we read (1 Chron. xvi. 40) of his appointing the priests to offer "the daily sacrifices" there, on the brazen altar of Moses, when Zadok was at their head, and Heman and Jeduthun were their resident musicians. In what particular part of Gibeon or of its immediate neighbourhood the tabernacle was stationed cannot be said with any certainty. Amid a considerable choice of likely places, one forming part of Gibeon itself, and just south of *El-Tib*, seems the likeliest, and to be preferred to the suggestion of Stanley ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 216), of *Neby-Samwil*, which is a mile distant. The present imposing occasion is the last of any importance on which Gibeon is brought before us (see also 1 Kings viii. 3; 1 Chron. ix. 35). There was the tabernacle. The removal of the tabernacle to Gibeon no doubt followed immediately on the destruction of Nob by Saul (1 Sam. xxii. 9; 1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40, compared with 37; xxi. 28, 29). Moses . . . made in the wilderness (see Exod. xxv., xxvi., xxvii., xxxiii. 7—10).

Ver. 4.—But the ark. Again, as in 1 Chron. xvi. 39, the writer emphasizes the fact of the temporary divorce that had obtained between the ark and the tabernacle (so 1 Sam. vi. 20; 2 Sam. vi. 2—19; 1 Kings iii. 2, 4, 15; 1 Chron. xiii. 3—14; xv. 1—3, 12—15, 23—29). David's pitching of the tent for it is recorded emphatically 1 Chron. xv. 1; xvi. 1; 2 Sam. vi. 17.

Ver. 5.—The brazen altar. This statement is introduced to lay stress on the fact that, though the ark indeed was not with the tabernacle, the brazen altar of burnt offering assuredly was there, this constituting the place, the proper spot, for sacrifice and worship. (For the account of the brazen altar and its making, see Exod. xxvii. 1—8; xxxviii. 1—7; also Numb. xvi. 38, 39.) This altar of burnt offering is often spoken of as *the* altar, to distinguish it from the altar of incense (Exod. xxx. 1; xxxix. 38; Numb. iv. 11). Bezaleel. (For detailed genealogy, see our 1 Chron. ii. 3—20; also Exod. xxxi. 2—5; xxxv. 30—35.) He put before. The reading (שָׁם), "was *there* before," is to be preferred, tallying as it does exactly with Exod. xl. 6. This was the reading understood by the Septuagint and Vulgate. The majority of manuscripts, however, and the Syriac Version, have שָׂם. Sought unto it. The analogy of the use of this word would make to be preferred the translation "sought him," *i.e.* the "Jehovah" just spoken of. But whether the object of the verb be in this place Jehovah or the altar, it would seem probable that the clause purports to say that Solomon and his people were accustomed to repair thither, while now they were about to repair thither with a very vast burnt offering.

Ver. 6.—A thousand burnt offerings. The first instance of the burnt offering is Gen. viii. 20, and thereafter in the same book xv. 9, 17; xxii. 2, 7, 13. It was manifestly the chiefest of the eucharistic kind of sacrifices, and for manifest reasons also was preceded by a "sin" offering (Exod. xxix. 36—38; Lev. viii. 14, etc.). (For full details of the ceremonial, see Lev. i., vi., vii., viii., *passim.*) The extraordinary number of the burnt offerings on this and some similar occasions may well excite our wonder (Numb. vii. 3, 17; 1 Kings viii.

64; ch. iv. 1 compared with vii. 7. See also Herod., 'Hist.,' vii. 43). The priests, of course, performed the sacrifices at the command of Solomon.

Vers. 7—12.—*The vision and prayer of Solomon, and God's answer to that prayer.* (Comp. 1 Kings iii. 5—15; ix. 2.)

Ver. 7.—**That night.** This can mean no other night than that which followed the day (or the days) of sacrifices so multitudinous. The parallel account in 1 Kings iii. 5 tells us the way in which "God appeared to Solomon," viz. by dream. The words of God's offer, **Ask what I shall give thee,** are identical in the parallel place.

Ver. 8.—**Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father.** These also are the exact words found in the parallel place, but they omit the words, "thy servant," before "David," found there. **And hast made me to reign in his stead.** This concise expression takes the place of two equivalent expressions, found at the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh verses in the parallel passage, the former of which passages also describes it as "this great kindness," *i.e.* kindness on the part of God—a description very much in harmony with David's own grateful acknowledgment to God (1 Kings i. 48). Up to this point our present account differs from its parallel in cutting out Solomon's eulogy of his father ("According as he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with thee"), and his humbler disparagement of himself ("And I, a little child, know not how to go out or come in").

Ver. 9.—**Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established.** This challenge on the part of Solomon, intended, without doubt, most reverently, is not given in the parallel place, and forms not only a distinctive but an interesting additional feature of the present account. It is thought by some that the "promise" here challenged is not very distinctly recorded anywhere, but surely passages like 1 Chron. xvii. 12—14; xxii. 10; xxviii. 6, 7 amply meet the case. See also 2 Sam. vii. 12, 15. **King over a people like the dust.** It is noteworthy that, though the equivalent of this phrase is found in the parallel, the distinctiveness of this *simile* is not found there. (For the use of the simile to express a vast number, see Gen. xxviii. 14; Numb. xxiii. 10; Zeph. i. 17; Zech. ix. 3.) It is not at all of frequent use in Scripture.

Ver. 10.—**Give me now wisdom and knowledge.** The force of the opening of this verse, and the relation of it to the former, are both prejudiced by the "now" (עַתָּה) being deposed from its right position as the *first* word in the verse. For the rest of this verse, the parallel passage has "an understanding heart," in place of our "*wisdom and knowledge;*" and "that I may discern between good and bad," in place of our that I may go out and come in before this people. In using the words, "wisdom and knowledge," Solomon seems to have remembered well the prayer of his father (1 Chron. xxii. 12). (For the pedigree of the simple and effective phrase, "know how to go out and come in," see Numb. xxvii. 17; Deut. xxxi. 2; 1 Sam. xviii. 13, 16; 2 Sam. iii. 25). It is at the same time refreshing to revisit the times when the most exalted nominal ruler was also the real ruler, as being the leader, the judge, the teacher in the highest sense, and "the feeder" of his people. Nor is it less refreshing to notice how, in Israel at least, the fact was so well recognized and honoured, that *justice* and *to judge just judgment* lay at the deepest foundation of civil society.

Ver. 11.—With this verse the answer to Solomon's prayer begins. It is here concisely given in two verses, but occupies five (vers. 10—14) in the parallel place, including the verse not found here, which says, "The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing." Otherwise there is no essential difference of any importance, though it may be noted that the parallel gives voice to the promise of "length of days," on the condition of Solomon fulfilling his part in showing obedience to the Divine will, and in following the steps of his father. **Riches, wealth** (עֹשֶׁר נְכָסִים). The most elementary idea of the former of these two words seems to be "straight growth," "prosperity;" of the latter, "to gather together" or "heap up." The former is found first in Gen. xxxi. 16; and in the verb (hiph. conjugation) in Gen. xiv. 23. Afterwards it is found in almost all of the historical books, in the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and in the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel. The latter word occurs only five times (Josh. xxii. 8; in this and the following verses; and in Eccles. v. 19; vi. 2). Its Chaldee form is also found in Ezra vi. 8 and vii. 26. A comparison of these passages scarcely sustains the supposition of some, suggested by the derivation of the word, that it marks specially those stores of useful things which constituted largely the wealth of Old Testament times. **Wisdom and knowledge.** The distinction between these is evident, as also that they are needful complements of one another for the forming of a catholic, useful, sound character.

Ver. 12.—**Such as none of the kings . . . before thee, neither . . . after thee.** These words were sadly ominous of the short-lived glory of the kingdom. Only two kings had reigned before Solomon in Israel, and the glory of the kingdom too surely culminated in his reign, and even before the end of it (ch. ix. 22, 23; 1 Chron. xxix. 25; Eccles. ii. 9). On the other hand, the gratuitous and spontaneous fulness of promise in the Divine reply to a human prayer that "pleased" the Being invoked is most noticeable, and preached beforehand indeed, the burden of the life of Jesus, "Seek ye first the kingdom . . . and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33). The contents of this verse are followed in the parallel by the words, "And Solomon awoke; and behold it was a dream." There can be no doubt that what is here rehearsed did not lose any force or anything of reality from its transpiring in a dream, of which the abundantly open statement of the method of it, as in "sleep," and in "a dream," may be accepted as the first cogent evidence. But beside this, the frequent recital in the Old Testament of occasions when significant and weighty matters of business import were so conducted by the Divine will forms ample ground and defence for the other class of occasions, of which more spiritual matter was the subject (Gen. xxviii. 12; xli. 7; xx. 3; xxxi. 10, 24; xxxvii. 5; xl. 5; xli. 32; Judg. vii. 15; Job xxxiii. 15; Dan. ii. 3; vii. 1; Matt. i. 20; ii. 13, 22; xxvii. 19). On the other hand, side by side with such passages are those that refer to dreams for their emptiness and transiency of impression, when similes of this kind of thing are required (Job xx. 8; Ps. lxxiii. 20; cxxvi. 1). This is not the place to enter into any argument of a metaphysical or physiological character respecting dreams, and what they may or may not avail. But as some persons know even too well how dreams have brought them most vivid, most torturing, and most exquisite experiences in turn, there will seem, to them at least, the less difficulty in admitting utterly their availableness for communications of highest import, not only from God to man, but under certain conditions from man to God. Without doubt, certain disabilities (and those, perhaps, more especially of the moral kind) attach to our mind in dreams. But do not dreams also find the scene of the keener activities of mind pure? Granted that the mind is then under ordinary circumstances without a certain control and self-commanding power, yet is it also in some large respects much more at liberty from that besetting tyranny of sense with which waking hours are so familiar! Hence its consummate daring and swiftness and versatility in dream beyond all that it knows in the body's waking state.

Ver. 13.—*Solomon's return after sacrifice from Gibeon to Jerusalem, and from "before the tabernacle of the congregation" to "before the ark of the covenant of the Lord" in Mount Zion.* (1 Kings iii. 15.) This verse not merely bears the trace of a slightly corrupt text in the presence of the Hebrew preposition [illegible] before אֹהֶל, where there can be no doubt the preposition מִ should stand, but also suggests (keeping in view our ver. 3, and comparing 1 Kings iii. 15) the condensed and cut-down method of Chronicles, and its strong preferences for *selecting* out of the various material at its command. The tabernacle of the congregation. This styling of the "tabernacle" is of very frequent occurrence. It is found above thirty times in Exodus, and fully as often in Leviticus and Numbers. Afterwards it is sprinkled more rarely in the historical books. The reason of its being styled "the tabernacle of the *congregation*" (מוֹעֵד) is doubtful—perhaps because of the gatherings of the people in front of it, or possibly because of its being the place where God would meet with Moses. The other name, the tabernacle of "witness" or "testimony" or covenant" (עֵדוּת; Numb. ix. 15, etc.), is not unfrequent. Hence the LXX. *σκηνὴ τοῦ μαρτυρίου*; the Vulgate, *tabernaculum testimonii;* and Luther's *Stiftshütten.* This verse very much stints the information contained in the parallel, to the effect that Solomon forthwith took his place before the ark of the covenant in Mount Zion, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and gave a feast to all his servants (2 Sam. vi. 17—19; 1 Chron. xvi. 1—3; Deut. xiv. 26—29). And he reigned over Israel. These words seem nugatory both in themselves and as placed here. They probably stand for 1 Kings iv. 1.

Vers. 14—17.—*The attraction to Jerusalem of the signs of wealth—chariots, horses, etc.—on the part of Solomon.* The excitement attending the great sacrifices at Gibeon, and before the ark in Jerusalem, had now subsided. And we obtain just a glimpse of the range of thought and purpose present to the mind of the reigning king. The large expenditure of money would infer without fail the show of brilliant prosperity in the grand city for the time. Whether this would last, and whether it would not infer oppressive taxation somewhere or other (1 Kings ix. 15, 21, 22; x. 25) among the people, time would show. Had this expenditure been all to record, none could suppose the commencing of the practical part of the king's reign either sound or auspicious. But, of course, it is to be qualified by other things that were transpiring, with which the parallel acquaints us (*e.g.* 1 Kings iii. 16—28), only in different order. We now, however, begin a rapid and self-contained sketch of the reign of Solomon to his very death (ch. ix.)—the sketch one of marked characteristics, and in consistent keeping with the presumable objects of this work. For it is very much monopolized by the account of the temple.

Ver. 14.—The contents of this and the following three verses are identical with the parallel 1 Kings x. 26—29, except that the words, "and gold," of our ver. 15 (ch. ix. 20) are not found there. The position of these four verses in the parallel, towards the close of the account of Solomon, would seem more natural than their position here, which has somewhat the appearance of a fragment interpolated, as on the other hand the account of the harlot-mothers there. **Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen.** The chariot was no institution of Israel (so Deut. xx. 1), neither of their earliest ancestors, nor of those more proximate. The earliest occasions of the mention of it (Gen. xli. 43; xlvi. 29; l. 9) are in connection with Egypt, and almost all subsequent occasions for a long stretch of time show it in connection with some foreign nation, till we read (2 Sam. viii. 4; 1 Chron. xviii. 4) of David "reserving horses" unhoughed "for a hundred chariots," apparently also "reserved" out of the very much larger number which he had taken in battle from Hadadezer King of Zobah. The very genius of the character of God's people, a *pilgrim*-genius, as well as their long-time pilgrim-*life*, quite accounts for the "chariot," though it be a war-chariot, having never ranked among their treasures (Deut. xvii. 16; 1 Sam. viii. 11). Now, however, Solomon thinks it the time to make it a feature of the nation's power and splendour. He gives the large order for fourteen hundred chariots apparently to Egypt (ver. 17; also ch. ix. 28), the appropriate number of horses to which would be probably four thousand (ch. ix. 25; comp. 1 Kings iv. 26, where note the corrupt numeral forty thousand, x. 26). Solomon's fourteen hundred chariots were probably intended to exceed the numbers of the Egyptian king (ch. xii. 3; comp. ch. xiv. 6), of Hadadezer's (2 Sam. viii. 4; 1 Chron. xviii. 4), and of the Syrians (2 Sam. x. 18). But, on the other hand, see 1 Sam. xiii. 5 and 1 Chron. xix. 7, unless, as seems very probable, the numerals in these places are again incorrect. Dr. Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible' contains an interesting article on the chariot (vol. i. 295). For significant allusions to the *horsemen*, reference may be made to 1 Sam. viii. 11; 1 Kings xx. 20; 2 Kings ii. 12; Isa. xxi. 7. **Twelve thousand horsemen.** These probably purport what we should call horse-*soldiers*, or cavalry. And it is likely that they come to designate these in virtue of the Hebrew word here used (פָּרָשִׁים) meaning horses of the cavalry *sort* (see Gesenius, 'Lexicon," *sub voce*). **The chariot cities.** In ch. viii. 5, 6 we are expressly told that Solomon "built" purposely these cities, for the chariots and for the horsemen, just as he built the "store" cities (see also 1 Kings ix. 17—19; Xenoph., 'Anab.,' i. 4. § 10).

Ver. 15.—And gold. The omission of these words in the parallel (1 Kings x. 27) is remarkable in the light of what we read in ch. ix. 20. We find the contents of this verse again in ch. ix. 27; as also in the parallel (1 Kings x. 27), just quoted with the exception already named. **Cedar trees.** The meaning is felled trunks of cedar (1 Chron. xxii. 4) (אֲרָזִים). Whether the wood intended is the cedar of Lebanon (*Pinus cedrus*, or *Cedrus conifera*), "tall" (Isa. ii. 13; xxxvii. 24; Amos ii. 9), "widespreading" (Ezek. xxxi. 8), odoriferous, with very few knots, and wonderfully resisting decay, is considered by authorities on such subjects still uncertain. Gesenius, in his 'Lexicon,' *sub voc.*, may be consulted, and the various Bible dictionaries, especially Dr. Smith's, under "Cedar;" and Dr. Kitto's 'Cyclopædia,' under "Erez." The writer in Dr. Smith's 'Dictionary' suggests that under the one word "cedar," the *Pinus cedrus*, *Pinus deodara*, *Yew*, *Taxus baccata*, and *Pinus sylvestris* (Scotch pine) were referred to popularly, and were employed when building purposes are in question. That the said variety was employed is likely enough, but that we are intended to understand this when the word "cedar" is used seems unlikely (see for further indication of this unlikeliness, the instancing of "firs" occasionally with "cedars," 1 Kings v. 10; ix. 11; ch. ii. 8) **Sycomore trees** (שִׁקְמִים). This word is found always in its present masc. plur. form except once, Ps. lxxviii. 47, where the plur. fem. form is found. The Greek equivalent in the Septuagint is always *συκάμινος*; but in the New Testament, and in the same treatise, *i.e.* the Gospel according to St. Luke, we find both *συκάμινος* and *συκομωρέα* (Luke xvii. 6 and xix. 4 respectively). Now, the former of these trees is the well-known mulberry tree. But the latter is what is called the *fig-mulberry*, or the *sycamore-fig;* and this is the tree of the Old Testament. Its fruit resembles the fig, grows on sprigs shooting out of the thick stems themselves of the tree, and each fruit needs to be *punctured* a few days before gathering, if it is to be acceptable eating

(Amos vii. 14; Isa. ix. 10). **In the vale**; *i.e.* in the lowland country, called the Shefelah. This is the middle one of the three divisions in which Judæa is sometimes described—mountain, lowland, and valley. This lowland was really the low hills, between mountains and plain, near Lydda and Daroma (the "dry," *i.q.* Negeb, Deut. xxxiv. 13), while the valley was the valley of Jordan, from Jericho to Engedi (Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' pp. 302, 309, 2nd edit.).

Ver. 16.—**Horses brought . . . out of Egypt.** Later on we read that horses were imported from other countries as well (ch. ix. 24, 28), as, for instance, from Arabia and Armenia (Ezek. xxvii. 14). **Linen yarn.** The words are without doubt wrong here. But it is impossible to say with any certainty what should be in their place. The Vulgate shows here *from Coa*, presumably meaning Tekoa, a small place on the road from Egypt to Jerusalem. It might not have been easy to surmise, however, so much as this, but for the fact that the Septuagint shows in the parallel place, "And from Tekoa" (Amos i. 1). The Septuagint, however, has for the present place, *Καὶ ἡ τιμὴ τῶν ἐμπόρωντοῦ βασίλεως πορεύεσθαι, καὶ ἠγόραζον.* The Hebrew word here translated "linen yarn" is מִקְוֵא (*i.q.* מִקְוֵה niph. of קָוָה, "to be gathered together"). Gesenius, followed by De Wette (and others), and himself following Piscator (born *circ.* 1480) and Vatablus (born *circ.* 1546), would translate the word "company," and read, "a company of the king's merchants took a company (of horses) at a price." Others would translate the word "import;" and read, "the import of the king's merchants was an import at a price," *i.e.* in money. Neither of these renderings can be considered really satisfactory. Some slight corruption of text still baulks us, therefore.

Ver. 17.—**Six hundred shekels of silver.** Some add up in this amount the vehicle itself, harness, horse or horses necessary to it, and the expense of *carriage* of the whole. Whether or no horses are included may be doubtful. The amount added up reaches, according to various estimates, £90 or £70. If we take the silver shekel at 3*s.* 4*d.* according to one of the later authorities (Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 81, 2nd edit.), the amount will be £100; and so for a horse £25. **For all the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of Syria**; see ch. viii. 7, 8; ix. 14, 23, 24, 26; 1 Kings iv. 21, 24; 2 Kings vii. 6; which last place in particular suggests that Solomon would be the more willing to assist neighbouring peoples in the purchase of horses, etc., who might be already tributary to him, or even vassals, or who might in future be in the better position to help him, when either required or hired to do so.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—17.—*Each highest need of life offers to turn into the first accepted and best rewarded prayer of life.* This chapter of seventeen verses might remind us of a picture and its mount and frame, a precious stone and its setting. In this sense it is a unity. The first six verses are used just to prepare us for the contents of the six that follow; and the last five summarily assure us that the fulfilment did not fall short of, nor halt long behind, promise. The now sole reign of Solomon, begun with the blessing that causeth to prosper, seemed (all too briefly, perhaps) to direct itself spontaneously to those religious observances that alike rightly acknowledged the past goodness of God, and augured the very best of auguries for the future. For Solomon acted promptly and religiously himself, and also taught and led a whole nation, his own nation, to do the same, when he sought and repaired to "the brazen altar" "before the tabernacle of the Lord"—that sacred and time-honoured tabernacle which "Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness." Since that date, oh, what journeys it had made!—what much more varied, stranger, wanderings and history it had representatively shared! What a career that nation escaped from Egypt now just five centuries had already run! what a mark on the very world's history it had availed to make! But to the picture itself, rather than its surroundings—picture, parable, solemn and sweet reality, all in one! There are to be noticed and studied: (1) *the appearance to Solomon*; (2) *the unhesitating prayer of Solomon*; (3) *the answer and promise vouchsafed to Solomon.*

I. THE APPEARANCE TO SOLOMON. 1. *The veritable fact in it*; i.e. that it was *God* who appeared. What we often vaguely call Providence; or a happy thought; or a sudden suggestion; or an unaccountable impression; or, worst of all, a chance of the waking mind or of the dream;—should in devout language, and equally in devout truth, be called by the name that is Love, and that is also to be supremely feared. 2. *The method of it.* Probably enough in dream, in one or other of the *kinds* of dream, with which Scripture makes us familiar; the deeper dream, or that which young Samuel's more resembled; or *thinking* in night's deep stillness, with all its unstinted retrospect of the day on which it had just closed. In brief, whatever the absolute fact was, it is *not necessary* to suppose that God appeared then any more literally or visibly than now sometimes to us, or that he appears any *less really* many a time to us. 3. *The time*; i.e. immediately upon Solomon's practical conduct, right conduct, devout and religious conduct, *and conduct that drew in* with itself the nature, the idea, the fact of public worship, public service, the action of the combined Church. To human works no merit belongs. They claim no worthiness of this kind. They cannot earn or deserve anything of God. Yet is it to be most distinctly and unequivocally noted how often God appears to view in *connection with* human works, interposes to aid and bless in the next scene or sequel of rightly intended honest endeavour or kind deed. It is as though he would graciously ever associate his notice, blessing, freest giving with our deeds, so that they be simple and sincere deeds, that these may be rested upon at some times by the quickening, encouraging memory thereof. It is not simply written that "God appeared" in the night, but emphatically "in *that* night." 4. *The object, or very matter of it.* Astonishing to say, it is not to hear a petition, not to answer a petition, but positively to *ask* for a petition—to *ask to be asked for some good gift.* This, when projected upon the plain page of the Divine book, is recognized as amazing condescension; *but* it is nothing in excess of what is ever going on in God's dealings with us. It comes of the fulness of his overflowing goodness, of his natural liberality, and of his unchanged forgivingness of spirit, to his erring family. 5. *The contradiction contained in it*, to the idea of human life, character, action, being based on any fatalistic scheme emanating from above. A man's own choice is here asked, elicited, challenged, acceded to, and granted! And herein, in all five particulars, we have but expressed in graphic parable the facts between God and human, individual life in all ages.

II. THE UNHESITATING PRAYER OF SOLOMON. There cannot be held to be any doubt that this prayer was approved, divinely approved, in what it contained. It cannot, perhaps, be asserted as positively that it "lacked nothing," and was as unchallengeable in what it did *not* contain. When we have travelled many a mile with Solomon, and have come to the latter milestones of his journey, thoughts make themselves a voice, and we fear that the prayer erred by defect. Let us take note first of what was incontestably good in it. 1. *It found its spring in the sense of genuine responsibility*—responsibility that has come from father to son, and more sacred and venerable for this; responsibility that was heightened by the memory of its being in matter that had enlisted special Divine promise, and which promise must not be allowed to fall to the ground through lack of human co-operation; and responsibility because of the intrinsic nature of the subject in hand. Prayer thus rising to the surface is earnest, sincere, deep; and no doubt it was so now with Solomon. 2. *It was prayer relatively high in its aim*, by the expressed Divine admission and commendation here. "Wisdom and knowledge" were above "riches, wealth, honour, the life of enemies, or long life for self." 3. *It was prayer for means, strength, grace to do duty*, to be equal to the requirements of lofty duty, and duty that in its significance and its results looked far outside individual interest or individual interest and honour combined. The standpoint of *duty* is equally grand and momentous! There may be prayer for high possessions—possessions of knowledge and wisdom even, that have selfishness and ambition in them, but not a grain of grace or an atom of sense and love of duty, and acknowledging of solemn responsibility. Solomon's prayer stands in vivid contrast to this sort of thing. He prayed for wisdom and knowledge that he might fill his father's place worthily, his own place aright—"serve his generation by the will of God," and in thus doing "please God" himself! 4. *It was prayer that failed to make provision for the highest, deepest, surest needs of all*; viz. humility, personal, practical, preserving piety, ever "a clean heart" and the renewing ever of "a right spirit." Of *these* things, unasked in the prayer, nothing is promised in its answer; and the sad clue may lie herein to much in Solomon's subsequent life. Thinking hereof, may we not lay it to heart for our own timely warning, when we are compelled to say of Solomon at this critical moment, "He left *unprayed* the things he ought to have prayed"?

III. THE ANSWER WITH PROMISE MADE BY GOD TO SOLOMON. 1. It expressly said to him, it reminds ourselves, how God knows the heart and measures prayer by the heart. "Because," he says, "this was in thy heart." There is many a prayer of the lip, of memory, of habit, of superstitious sentiment, of some vague feeling of duty, but the heart is far away, and from such prayers, so-called, God himself is equally far away. 2. God granted that petition, not *simply* because it was a heart's true desire, but because it was also "most expedient"—it was a true heart's true desire! It was "most expedient" for Solomon, for the high place he held, and "all Israel"—"thy people"—over whom he reigned. 3. God crowns the answer with promise as well. The precious thing granted by way of answer, incomparably the best thing by far, God wreathes with splendour—a splendour, he expressly says, unknown before, and hereafter never to be eclipsed! So, how often has it been that those who have with single eye, steadfast heart, sought first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, have found all other things added to them! So, how often has it been that "those who feared God" have found they "lacked no good thing"! And even earthly honour, earthly wealth, earthly good, have been bestowed with overflowing cup on those who could safely receive it, because they had shown they desired first, prayed first, for purer, higher good—the real, the right, the true, the lasting.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*A bright beginning.* It is far from being everything when we make a good beginning; for many a bright beginning has a very dark ending. Yet is it a very great advantage to start well on our course. Few men ever commenced their career under more favourable auspices than did King Solomon, when "he sat on the throne of the Lord as king, instead of David his father" (1 Chron. xxix. 23). He had much to sustain and to encourage him.

I. THE HERITAGE HE HAD FROM HIS FATHER. It was much to him that he was "Solomon, *the son of David.*" He was known to be the favourite son and chosen heir of his illustrious father. All the strong attachment which the people felt for the late (or the dying) sovereign went to establish his son upon the throne. Solomon acceded to the gathering and deepening affection which his father David had been winning to himself through a long and prosperous reign. All the influence which an honoured and beloved leader can convey to his successor was communicated to him: thus was he "strengthened in the kingdom."

II. CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL ADVANTAGES. "The Lord magnified him exceedingly." Taking this with the same expression (and the words that accompany it) in 1 Chron. xxix. 25, we may safely infer that God had given him: 1. A noble and commanding presence, such as attracts and affects those who behold it (see Ps. xlv. 2). 2. A winning address, a bearing and demeanour which drew men to him and called forth their good will. 3. A mind of unusual capacity, an intellectual superiority that enabled him to acquit himself honourably in private and in public affairs. Thus was he "magnified exceedingly;" he was held in high honour, was "made great" in the estimation of all the people.

III. THE FAVOURING PRESENCE OF GOD. "The Lord his God was with him." How much is held and hidden in that simple phrase, "God was with him" (see Gen. xxi. 22; xxxix. 2; 1 Sam. xviii. 14)! It meant that God was with him to shield him from harm, to direct him in difficulty, to inspire him with wisdom, to sustain him in trial, to enrich him with every needful good. God was attending his steps and "laying his hand upon him."

We may say that this was not only a bright, but even a brilliant, beginning of the king's career. We cannot hope for a commencement like that; that is only granted to the few, to the very few indeed. This is true, but it is also true that to most if not to all men, certainly to those of us who have a knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, there is possible a bright beginning of active life. In all or nearly all cases there is: 1. *A heritage from those who have gone before us.* From our parents, from our forefathers, from the toil and struggle and suffering of our race, there comes to us a heritage of good. This may be material wealth; or, if not that, knowledge, truth, wisdom, precious thought in striking and powerful language, inspiring examples of heroic deeds and noble lives. If not sons of such fathers as David, we are the children of privilege, we are "the heirs of all the ages." 2. *Some personal advantages;* either in bodily skill, or in address, or in mental equipment, or in strength of will, or in force of character. 3. *God's gracious and favouring presence.* For if we are "reconciled to him by the death of his Son," we may most surely count on the promise that he will be "with us;" with us not only to observe our course and mark our life, but to direct our ways, to "strengthen" us in our sphere, however humble our kingdom may be—to make our life fruitful of good and blessing, to enrich us with much pure and elevating joy, to guide us to the goal and to the prize. Let us but yield ourselves to him whose we are, and to that service where our freedom and our duty alike are found, and ours will be a bright beginning that shall have promise of a still fairer and brighter ending.—C.

Vers. 3—5.—*The ark and the altar; obedience and sacrifice.* How came it to pass that the ark was in one place, and the tabernacle and the brazen altar in another? How did it happen that the ark was in Jerusalem, and the altar of sacrifice at Gibeon? Surely they should have been together. So it was originally ordained; so it was at the beginning; and that was the final disposition. There was something irregular and not according to the commandment in the arrangement described in the text. It is difficult to understand how such a departure from the Divine plan could exist in a dispensation in which careful and even minute conformity to detail was accounted a virtue. The connection and the disconnection of these two institutions may suggest to us—

I. OUR TWOFOLD OBLIGATION AS SYMBOLIZED BY THE ARK AND THE ALTAR. 1. Of these one is *worship* or *sacrifice.* Men approached the altar of Jehovah with their gifts or sacrifices, and they then came consciously into his presence; they brought their oblations to him; they made a direct appeal to him for his mercy and his blessing. This forms one part, and a large part, of the obligation under which we rest toward God. Jew or Gentile, under any dispensation whether old or new, we are sacredly bound to draw near to God in reverent worship, to bring to him our pure and our costly offerings, to entreat of him his Divine favour, to pay unto him our vows. 2. The other is *obedience.* The ark contained the sacred tables of the Law on which were written by the hand of Moses the ten commandments. This was *the* great treasure of the ark, and it was always associated with these two tables; it was, therefore, the symbol of obedience. Both Jew and Gentile are under the very strongest bonds to "obey the voice of the Lord," "to keep his commandments," to do that which is right in his sight, and to shun all those things which he has condemned.

II. OUR TEMPTATION. We are often tempted to do in life and in fact what was pictured here—to put a distance between the altar and the ark, between worship and obedience. Too often there is a very wide gap, even a deep gulf, between the two. One man makes everything of forms of devotion, and nothing of purity and excellence of conduct. Another makes everything of behaviour, and nothing of worship. We are led, either by the current of the time or by the inclination of our own individual temperament, to go off in one direction and to leave the highway of Divine wisdom; to exaggerate one aspect of truth and to depreciate another; to put asunder what God has joined together and meant to go together. And this exaggeration, this separation, ends in error, in faultiness, in serious departure from the mind and the will of God.

III. OUR WISDOM. As, later on, the ark and the altar were reunited, as they both stood within the precincts of the temple, and spoke of the vital connection between sacrifice and obedience, so should we see to it that, if there has been any separation of these two elements of piety in our experience, there should be a reunion and, in future, the closest association. 1. The habit of obedience should include the act of worship; for worship is one of those things which God has enjoined. 2. Each act of obedience should spring from the impulse which worship fosters—a desire to please and honour the present and observant Lord. 3. Worship should lead up to and end in obedience; for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The devotion that ends in service, in purity, in truthfulness, in fidelity, in self-forgetting kindness, is after the mind of Jesus Christ. Let the ark never be far from the altar, but worship and obedience be always in close companionship.—C.

Vers. 7—12.—*The Divine responsiveness, etc.* From the interesting scene described in these verses (more fully in 1 Kings iii.) we may glean some lasting truths.

I. THAT WE MAY CONFIDENTLY RECKON ON THE DIVINE RESPONSIVENESS. Solomon went to Gibeon with "all the congregation," in very great state, to seek the Lord there, and there he offered abundant sacrifices (ver. 6). And God responded to his act of piety by seeking him, by coming to him and making him a gracious and generous offer. Without any state, in lowliest obscurity, we may repair to the quiet and solitary place, and there seek God; and there, too, he will seek us and manifest himself to us, and he will bless and enrich us also. There is an unfailing and a large responsiveness in "him with whom we have to do."

II. THAT GOD HAS MANY WAYS OF ACCESS TO HIS CHILDREN. (Ver. 7.) In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon "in a dream by night" (1 Kings iii. 5). At other times he appeared to his servants in a vision in their wakeful hours (Exod. iii. 2; Isa. vi. 1) Our Lord was seen by the Apostle Paul under circumstances that were unique (Acts ix.), and subsequently he manifested himself in other ways to his servant. God has access to us—his children—in many ways. At any time he may "lay his hand upon us;" he may make known his will to us. It is our wisdom to expect it; it is our duty to pray and to look for it.

III. THAT SOLOMON SHOWED A DEEPER WISDOM THAN ANY HE ASKED GOD TO GIVE HIM. He asked for "wisdom and knowledge" (ver. 10); and the wisdom he asked for was cleverness, penetration, political sagacity, subtlety of mind to read the thoughts of men, readiness to see at once what was the expedient policy to adopt, range of human learning. All this was valuable, and much to be desired; but all of this together was not wisdom of so deep and precious a kind as that shown by Solomon in making the choice he made. To ask for that gift which would enable him to fill well the sphere in which Divine providence had placed him,—this was better than all possible intellectual equipments. No learning, no talent, no genius, is of such value and importance as *the spirit of fidelity*. Everything else without that will leave life a failure and make man a guilty being. But to be possessed with the spirit of faithfulness, to be supremely desirous of taking the part and doing the work to which God has called us,—this is the true success, and this will end in well-being of a pure and lasting kind.

IV. THAT WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED TO MAINTAIN AND EVEN TO ENLARGE THE HERITAGE WE HAVE RECEIVED. (Ver. 8.) Solomon evidently felt deeply impressed, if not oppressed, with the thought that his father, David, had left a very great and serious charge in his hands, and he was rightly anxious that it should be well maintained. It becomes us, as members of a family, as citizens of the nation, to consider what we have inherited from those who have gone before us—from their labours and sufferings and prayers, and to ask ourselves what we are about to do to guard and to strengthen, and, if it may be so, to enlarge and enrich that precious legacy.

V. THAT IF WE SEEK THE BEST WE SHALL FIND MORE THAN WE SEEK. (Vers. 11, 12.) Solomon's happy experience of God's graciousness is very far indeed from being singular. We may all participate here. If we seek rightness of soul with him we shall find it, and not only that, but a profound and most blessed peace of mind as well. If we seek purity of heart, we shall find what we seek, and happiness beside. If we seek the good of others we shall secure that end, and we shall at the same time be building up our own Christian character. Pursue the very best, and with the best of all will come that which is good, that which is not the highest, but which we shall be very glad to have and to enjoy.—C.

Ver. 7.—*God's offer to the young.* "What a splendid and enviable position!" we are inclined to say; "one removed from ours by the whole breadth of fortune. How utterly unlike the conditions under which we find ourselves to-day!" But is it so? Is there not, on the other hand, quite as much of comparison as of contrast between the position of the young sovereign and our own, as we look forward to the future that awaits us? Does not God say to each one of us, "Ask what I shall give thee?"

I. THERE IS A NOBLE FUTURE IN FRONT OF US. Only a very small fraction of mankind may look for royalty or high rank, for large wealth or extensive power. But it is highly probable that if this *were* our lot, we should envy those who, in humbler spheres, were saved the many penalties of prominence and power. And, apart from this, there is a very true heritage which is open to us all. More or less at our command are—beginning at the bottom of the scale, and moving upwards: 1. Bodily comforts; and these lowest gratifications are the more worthy and lasting as they are more pure and moderate. 2. Human friendship—domestic love, the sweet and sacred ties of the heart and the home. 3. Mental activity—the intellectual enjoyment which comes from the observation of the works of God and the mastery of the works of men: all the keen, strong, elevating delights of the active mind. 4. The service of God, the friendship of Jesus Christ; thus realizing the end and attaining the true satisfaction of our being. 5. Working with God; out-working with him the great redemptive scheme he has designed and is effecting. 6. A high and happy place in the heavenly kingdom. Such large and noble heritage God offers to give the children of men, whether born in a palace or in a cottage.

II. GOD MAKES THIS OFFER ON CONDITIONS. His offer to Solomon was not absolutely unconditional; he would not have been the wise or learned man he became if he had not studied; nor the rich man he became if he had been a mere spendthrift, etc. God is too kind to any of his children to grant them his gifts without attaching conditions which must be fulfilled. He says, "Here is my gift, but you must ask me for it; and the way to ask for it is to *fulfil the conditions on which I bestow it*. Shall I give you temporal prosperity? ask for it by being diligent, temperate, civil, faithful. Shall I give you human love, the esteem of those around you? ask for it by being virtuous, honourable, generous, amiable. Shall I give you knowledge, wisdom? ask for it by being studious. Shall I give you eternal life? ask for it by fulfilling the conditions on which it is promised—repentance toward God, and faith in Jesus Christ. Ask what I shall give you; take the course which you know is the one constant antecedent of my bestowal."

III. EVERYTHING HANGS ON THE WISDOM OF OUR CHOICE. 1. It is sad to think that many go through life without caring to accept God's challenge at all; they pass through a life charged with precious opportunities, freighted with golden chances, never caring to inquire how much they may make of the life that is slipping through their hands. 2. Others deliberately choose the lower good; they ask for comfort, for pleasure, for gratification, for abundance of earthly good, or for nothing higher than human love. 3. Our wisdom is to ask God for the *highest good*; for the diamond, and not the granite; for the cup that heals, and not for that which soothes; for the key that opens to the rich treasury, and not that which admits us only a cabinet of curiosities; for that which will make the heart pure and holy, and the life noble and useful, and which will make death to be lighted up with a glorious hope;—to ask for heavenly wisdom and eternal life. We should ask for the best because it is the best and highest; and also because, as with Solomon, it commands the lower good as well (vers. 11, 12). Let us seek first the kingdom of God, because that is the one good, the supreme thing to seek, and also because other and lower things are added to it (Matt. vi. 33).—C.

Vers. 13—17.—*From the altar to the throne.* A great step was now taken. Solomon, the young man, mounted the throne of his father David; in so doing he assumed the function of one who had behind him a large and varied experience, and who had above and around him the assured and proved loving-kindness of God. Solomon began his reign most propitiously. We gather—

I. THAT IT WAS WELL TO STEP TO THE THRONE FROM THE ALTAR. He came "*from before the tabernacle* . . . and reigned" (ver. 13). There could have been no place so suitable as that where Jehovah was worshipped from which to ascend to kingly power. There is no resort so good as the throne of grace, from which we can ascend any throne of authority or power to-day. It is well, indeed, to pass from intercourse with God to association with men and to the conduct of human affairs. The visit to the house of the Lord, fellowship with Christ at his table or in our own chamber, will give a calmness of spirit, an unselfishness of aim, and a steadfastness of principle which will go far to qualify us for the difficult duties and heavy burdens and (it may be) the serious battles of daily life.

II. THAT ONE MAN MAY HOLD IN HIS HAND THE WELL-BEING OF MANY. Solomon "reigned over Israel." In those days *reigning meant governing*. And though the Hebrew monarchy was not actually absolute, it was invested with great power. A good sovereign wrought great blessings, and a bad one caused terrible evils to his country. Great power, in the shape of royal authority, has passed or is passing away. But still men "reign" over others—lead, direct, rule, influence, mightily affect them for good or evil. Very great power has the statesman, the preacher, the poet, the principal, the teacher. The possession of power is usually esteemed a thing to be greatly coveted. But it is as full of solemn responsibility as it is of noble opportunity; it calls for a deep sense of obligation and accountability; also for peculiar prayerfulness of spirit and of habit. Humble and not proud, conscious of dependence on God and not self-sufficient, should be the men of high position and commanding influence.

III. THAT AFFLUENCE MAY BE A GOOD SIGN, BUT IT IS A PERILOUS CONDITION. All these instances of national prosperity related in the text—the abundance of horses and chariots, and of gold and silver, the cultivation of choice trees, etc.—were signs that Jehovah was favouring the land, and that Solomon was fulfilling his early promise. But affluence, whether individual or national, is a dangerous condition. It tends to luxury; and luxury leads only too often to sloth and self-indulgence; and these lead straight to wrong-doing and impiety. It is "a slippery place," where a few can walk without stumbling, but where the many slip and fall. 1. Envy not the greatly prosperous; plenteousness of gold and silver may impoverish the soul while it enriches the treasury. 2. Care much, care most, for the abundance of Christian truth, of sterling principle, of generous helpfulness.—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*The beginning of a reign.* I. THE KING'S PERSON DESCRIBED. 1. *The owner of an auspicious name—Solomon,* "Peace," equivalent to *Friedrich* or *Frederick.* Perhaps (1) alluding to the fact that when he was born his father was at peace with God (2 Sam. xii. 24). God's mercies, especially to the soul, are worthy of commemoration (Ps. ciii. 2). (2) Reflecting the peace which at that time prevailed in the land, his birth most likely not having taken place till after the capture of Rabbah, and the termination of the Ammonitish war (Keil). When David's greater son, the Prince of Peace, was born, "the (Roman) empire was peace." (3) Prognosticating the peaceful character of his rule (Ps. lxxii. 7), and the undisturbed rest of his reign (1 Kings iv. 24; 1 Chron. xxii. 9). 2. *The son of a distinguished father—David.* Originally a Bethlehem shepherd-lad (1 Sam. xvi. 11), Jesse's youngest son climbed the giddy heights of fame with marvellous celerity and success, becoming in swift succession a brilliant warrior, a skilful harper, an agreeable courtier, a popular leader, a trusted sovereign, a sweet singer, a devout psalmist, a far-seeing prophet. Possessed of almost every qualification requisite to render him the idol of his fellows, he found the pathway of greatness easier to tread than do men of smaller stature and less-gifted soul. To have been the son of such a sire was no mean honour to Solomon, though it entailed upon him correspondingly large responsibility; while, if it multiplied his chances of achieving in the future a similar distinction for himself, it no less certainly created for him difficulties from which otherwise he might have been exempt. 3. *The heir of a prosperous empire—Israel.* "The kingdom inherited by Solomon had been carved by the sword of David. The Philistines had been driven back to their plains, retaining, however, the strongholds of Gath and Gezer at the edge of the hill country. The capital of the Ammonites, Rabbah, had been taken, and the empire embraced all the Holy Land from Beersheba to Sidon, ruled by the king at Jerusalem" (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. [illegible]). 4. *The representative of a Divine Superior—Jehovah.* Solomon ascended David's throne by Divine right, because by Divine grace and for Divine ends (Ps. ii. 6). Solomon was Jehovah's vassal, and held his regal power only on condition of ruling in Jehovah's name and for Jehovah's glory (2 Sam. xxiii. 3). If Solomon was Israel's king, Jehovah was Solomon's.

II. THE KING'S THRONE ESTABLISHED. 1. *By the removal of his enemies.* In particular by the execution of three dangerous characters. (1) Joab, his cousin (1 Chron. ii. 16), a general of commanding abilities and restless ambition, who with the army at his back might soon have embroiled the land in war and prevented the hope of a peaceful reign from being realized. (2) Shimei, a Benjamite, a personal enemy of David (2 Sam. xvi. 5—13), who, besides having broken his parole (1 Kings ii. 36—46), could not be trusted not to contrive mischief against David's son. (3) Adonijah, a half-brother of Solomon (2 Sam. iii. 4; 1 Chron. iii. 1), a formidable rival, who, in virtue of his right of primogeniture, pretended to the crown, and might have been the means of stirring up civil faction in the land. Difficult to justify on grounds of Christian morality, these assassinations nevertheless contributed to the establishment of Solomon's throne. 2. *By the union of his subjects.* As yet the empire was undivided. The ten tribes still adhered to the house of David. "All Israel obeyed him, and all the princes and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of King David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king" (1 Chron. xxix. 23, 24). 3. *By the help of his God.* "The Lord his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly." As Divine grace set, so Divine power kept him on the throne. Without Heaven's favour and assistance kings just as little as common men can prosper. As Jehovah giveth the kingdom to whomsoever he will (Dan. iv. 25), so through him alone can kings reign (Prov. viii. 15). He also removeth and setteth up kings (Dan. ii. 21); yea, the hearts of kings are in his hand (Prov. xxi. 1). Jehovah was with Solomon in virtue of the promise made to David (2 Sam. vii. 12), and because of the piety which still distinguished himself (ver. 6; cf. ch. xv. 2). This was the true secret of Solomon's prosperity upon the throne no less than of Joseph's in the prison (Gen. xxxix. 2).

III. THE KING'S ALLEGIANCE TENDERED. 1. *Before the tabernacle of the Lord.* This then at Gibeon, five miles north-west of Jerusalem. Originally a Canaanitish royal city (Josh. ix. 17; x. 2), and afterwards the scene of a clever fraud perpetrated upon Joshua by its inhabitants, as well as of a bloody battle in their defence (Josh. x. 1—14), it latterly became in David's time, because of the presence of the tabernacle, a Levitical city with a high place presided over by Zadok and his brethren (1 Chron. xvi. 39). Thither accordingly Solomon repaired to inaugurate his reign by professing fealty and submission to the King of kings. 2. *With the offering of sacrifice.* Within the tabernacle court stood the brazen altar of Bezaleel (Exod. xxxviii. 1), upon which were offered a thousand burnt offerings—a magnificent service, even for a king, and symbolic of (1) the homage he presented to Jehovah, (2) the consecration he then made of himself to the work to which Jehovah had called him, and (3) the desire he cherished that his reign might be begun and ended in Jehovah's favour and under Jehovah's protection. 3. *In the presence of his people.* "All the congregation," in its representatives, "went with him to the high place at Gibeon." Not ashamed of his religion, Solomon acknowledged his dependence on and submission to Jehovah in the most public manner. So are kings, princes, subjects, all men, expected to confess God and Christ before men (Matt. x. 32).

Learn: 1. The value of a good beginning, in business as in religion. 2. The need of Divine assistance in all undertakings. 3. The propriety of consecrating all to God in youth. 4. The possibility of declining from early faith. 5. The duty of never being ashamed of religion. 6. The melancholy fact that good men may do doubtful actions. 7. The beauty and propriety of social worship.—W.

Vers. 7—12.—*A young king's choice.* I. THE PERMISSION GRANTED TO SOLOMON. "Ask what I shall give thee." Granted: 1. *By whom?* God (*Elohim*), the Giver *par excellence*, of whom David had said, "All things come of thee" (1 Chron. xxix. 14); "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. xxxiii. 5); and whom a New Testament writer describes as "the Father of lights," etc. (Jas. i. 5, 17). The invitation here accorded to Solomon, after the manner of Oriental monarchs (Esth. v. 6; ix. 12; Matt. xiv. 7), was and is pre-eminently after the manner of the King of kings (Matt. vii. 7; Jas. i. 5). Christ extends the same to his followers: "If ye shall ask anything in my Name, I will do it" (John xiv. 14; cf. xvi. 23, 24). 2. *When?* "In that night;" *i.e.* after the day in which Solomon had been offering sacrifice—not without significance. God is not likely to appear at night, at least in grace, to them who have been unmindful of him throughout the day. 3. *How?* In a dream-vision (1 Kings iii. 5), which, however, warrants not the deduction that the incident had no solid basis of reality, and that here is only the record of a dream. Even were this correct, it would not be without value as showing the current and tenor of Solomon's thoughts and feelings during the preceding day. Men seldom have pleasant dreams of God upon their midnight couches who have not had him in their thoughts all their waking hours. Yet that in Solomon's dream were a veritable manifestation of God to his soul, and a *bona fide* transaction of asking and answering, of giving and receiving, is proved by the fact that Solomon obtained what he asked. 4. *Why?* To prove what was in Solomon's heart, to test whether the ceremonies of the preceding day had been the outcome and expression of a genuinely devout soul, to ascertain whether he had ascended the throne with a clear grasp of the situation, whether he knew what he most required for the successful execution of his kingly office. So God still tests his people and men in general by extending to them a similar permission to that he gave Solomon (Matt. vii. 7), and by occasionally in his providence bringing them into situations where they must choose, as Solomon was invited to do, what they shall have as their chief good.

II. The request preferred by Solomon. "Give me now wisdom and knowledge." 1. *The purport of this request.* If "wisdom" and "knowledge" are to be distinguished, which is doubtful, the former will be the general and the latter the particular, the former the principle the latter the application, the former the root the latter the fruit (cf. Prov. viii. 12; Eph. i. 17); "wisdom," the soul's capacity for seeing truth and discerning its adaptations to the particular exigencies of life; "knowledge," that truth as apprehended and possessed by the soul. Solomon craved the spirit of wisdom, that with clear and single vision he might "see" God's will concerning himself in every situation in his future career, and the faculty of apprehension that he might always know what that will required him to do. No prayer could have been more appropriate in his lips at the important juncture in life at which he stood. No prayer could better befit any one at any juncture. The prime necessities of the soul are—an eye to see and light to see with, a capacity to find out and comprehend God's will concerning itself (Ps. cxliii. 8). The Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds, through the ignorance that is in them (Eph. iv. 18). God's people go astray mostly through defect of knowledge (Isa. v. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 34). 2. *The reason of this request.* Solomon, conscious of inexperience and inability to discharge the duties of the kingly office, felt he could not rightly "go out and come in before" or "adequately judge" so great a people as Israel. A hopeful sign for Solomon it was that he knew and was willing to confess his want of wisdom and knowledge. As the first step towards holiness is to acknowledge sin, so the first genuine movement in the direction of self-improvement of any kind is the admission of defect. Solomon confessed himself a little child, who knew not how to go out or come in (1 Kings i. 7), and Tennyson in similar language depicts the natural condition of the race—

> "Behold, we know not anything;
>
> · · · · ·
>
> So runs my dream; but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night,
> An infant crying for the light,
> And with no language but a cry."
> ('In Memoriam,' liv.)

It is doubtful, however, if that expresses the mood of any but the loftier spirits. When souls begin to cry for light they are no longer absolutely blind, but have become conscious of and are pained by the darkness. 3. *The plea of this request.* Not that he was a great man's son, and indeed a great man himself, at least in social position, or that his youth had been virtuously spent, and that he was even then piously inclined; but that God had graciously covenanted with David his father, promising to be a father to David's son, and to establish David's throne for ever (2 Sam. vii. 12—16). So with no plea but that of grace, and no argument but that of God's covenant with men on the ground of Christ's sacrifice, need suppliants on any errand approach the throne of God.

III. The answer returned to Solomon. "Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee," etc. 1. *What Solomon had asked was obtained.* So God still gives to them that ask him for the higher blessings of his grace—gives unconditionally, freely, and exactly as men ask. So Christ says to his disciples, "All things whatsoever ye desire in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22). And even when they ask temporal or material blessings not inconsistent with their higher good, these are not withheld (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). See the case of the blind men of Jericho who were cured (Matt. xx. 34). 2. *What Solomon had not asked was superadded.* He had not asked wealth, fame, power, or long life; and just because he had asked none of these things, lo! all these things were added. So Christ says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, raiment, etc.] will be added"—thrown into the bargain (Matt. vi. 33); and Paul adds that "God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20, 21).

Learn: 1. The liberty God's people have in prayer. 2. The superiority of wisdom, *i.e.* of heavenly wisdom (Jas. iii. 17), over all earthly things (Prov. iv. 7). 3. The reality of answers to prayer. 4. The profit of sometimes limiting our requests at God's throne.—W.

Vers. 13—17.—*The glory of Solomon.* I. HIS SPLENDID EQUIPAGE. "Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen." 1. *A sign of great prosperity.* Mentioned on this account rather than as a proof of the expensiveness and burdensomeness of Solomon's reign (Ewald). (1) A discrepancy. Solomon had 40,000 stalls (1 Kings iv. 26; Josephus, 'Ant. Jud.,' viii. 2. 4); 12,000 horsemen and 1400 chariots (ver. 14; ch. x. 26); 4000 stalls and 12,000 horsemen (ch. ix. 25). (2) An explanation. The stalls probably were 4000, the horsemen 12,000, and the chariots 1400. The Israelitish war-chariot, like the Egyptian and Assyrian, may have been two-horsed, in which case 1400 chariots would represent 2800 horses. A reserve force of 1200 would bring the total number of horses to 4000, which would require 4000 stalls. That the horsemen should be 12,000 may be explained by supposing that, as Solomon's equestrian equipage was more for show than action, each horse may have had a rider as well as each chariot a charioteer; or the term "horsemen" may have embraced all persons connected with the equestrian service. 2. *An act of great unwisdom.* If the Divine prohibition (Deut. xvii. 16) forbade not the actual possession of horses by Israelitish kings, it certainly condemned their indefinite multiplication. David respected this prohibition (2 Sam. viii. 4; 1 Chron. xviii. 4); Solomon overstepped its limits, consequently what Moses had predicted ensued—first Solomon sought a matrimonial alliance with (1 Kings iii. 1), and then the people put their trust in, Egypt (2 Kings xviii. 24; Isa. xxxi. 1; Hos. vii. 11). The glory of princes does not always harmonize with the commands of the King of kings. Solomon's horsemen and chariots were partly kept in Jerusalem to augment his magnificence, and partly distributed through chariot-cities, not so much to overawe the people as for convenience in providing fodder for the beasts and meeting the state necessities of the king.

II. HIS ENORMOUS WEALTH. The revenues of Solomon were: 1. *Varied.* Gold and silver and cedar wood; the precious metals obtained from Ophir, in South Arabia (Ewald, Keil, Bähr, etc.), by means of Tarshish ships (cf. the modern expressions, "Indiamen," "Greenlanders"), which sailed from Ezion-geber, on the Red Sea (ch. ix. 21; 1 Kings ix. 26—28), and also from the numerous Eastern potentates—"all the kings of the earth" (ch. ix. 23), who came to hear his wisdom, and brought every man his present, vessels of silver and vessels of gold (ch. ix. 24); the timber purchased from Hiram of Tyre, and procured from Mount Lebanon (1 Kings v. 10). 2. *Abundant.* Making large allowance for rhetorical exaggeration, the crown wealth in Solomon's days was immense. Even if the gold and silver were barely as plentiful as stones (ver. 15), one may judge of its quantity by the statements that "the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents" (equivalent to £3,646,350, estimating the gold talent at £5475), besides that brought by chapmen, merchants, foreign kings, and provincial governors (ch. ix. 13, 14; 1 Kings x. 14, 15). This accumulation of wealth in the hands of the crown, more accordant with ancient than with modern practice, was likewise then more excusable than now for obvious religious as well as political reasons.

III. HIS COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE. 1. *How far it extended.* To Egypt. The first mention of commercial intercourse between Israel and Egypt, this is also one of the earliest indications of contact between these two peoples since the Exodus; and the silence of Scripture as to Egypt during the long interval between the Exodus and the age of Solomon receives a striking confirmation from the monuments, which show "no really great or conquering monarch between Rameses III. and Sheshonk I." (Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' p. 328). 2. *In what it consisted.* Horses and chariots. A native of Armenia and Media, whence it was fetched by the Jews to Palestine (Ezra ii. 66), the horse had been used in Egypt from the earliest times (Gen. xli. 43; xlvii. 17), and in Solomon's time had been brought by the Egyptians to a high degree of cultivation in respect both of swiftness and courage—two qualities highly serviceable for war. Hence Solomon naturally turned to the Nile valley when he thought of setting up an equestrian establishment. The manufacturing of war-chariots had also engaged the attention of the Pharaohs and their people; and these likewise were imported by the Israelitish monarch. Taking the shekel at 3*s.* 4*d.*, the price of a horse was £25, and of a war-chariot (perhaps with two horses and harness) £100 sterling. 3. *By whom it was conducted.* By the king's merchants, who were so called, not because, as foreign horse-dealers settled in the country, they were required to contribute to the king's treasury a portion of their gains in the shape of an income-tax (Bertheau), but because they traded for the king (Keil), acting as his agents, going down to Egypt, purchasing the animals in droves, and fetching them up for his use. So skilful did these merchants show themselves, both in judging of the animals and in driving bargains with Egyptian dealers, and so far had their fame travelled, that their services were sought for by the Hittite and Syrian kings of the day.

LESSONS. 1. The criminality of disobedience. 2. The danger of wealth. 3. The advantages of trade and commerce.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—In the Hebrew text this verse stands as the last of ch. i. **Determined.** The Hebrew word is the ordinary word for "said;" as, *e.g.*, in the expression of such frequent occurrence, "The Lord said." Its natural equivalent here might be, he *gave the word*, or *issued the command*, for the building of a house. **For the Name of the Lord;** better, *to the Name of the Lord* (1 Kings v. 3; or in Hebrew text, v. 18; 1 Chron. xxii. 7). The expression, "the Name of the Lord," is of very early date (Gen. iv. 26). A name named upon a person at the first purported as far as possible to mark his *nature*, either its *tout ensemble* or some striking attribute of it. Hence the changed name, sometimes of Divine interposition (Gen. xvii. 5, 15; xxxii. 28; xxxv. 10); and much more noticeably the alterations of the Divine Name, to serve and to mark the progressive development of the revelation of God to man (Gen. xvii. 1; Exod. iii. 14; vi. 3; xxxiv. 14). So the *Name of the Lord* stands ever—monogram most sacred—for himself. **A house for his kingdom;** *i.e.* a royal residence for Solomon himself. This is more clearly expressed as, "in his own house" (ch. vii. 11; viii. 1; 1 Kings ix. 10, 15). The description of this house for himself is given in 1 Kings vii. 1—13. But no parallel account exists in Chronicles.

Ver. 2.—The presence of this verse here, and the composition of it, may probably mark some corruptness of text or error of copyists, as the first two words of it are the proper first two words of ver. 17, and the remainder of it shows the proper contents of ver. 18, which are not only in other aspects apparently in the right place there, but also by analogy of the parallel (1 Kings v. 15, 16). The contents of this verse will therefore be considered with vers. 17, 18.

Ver. 3.—**Huram.** So the name is spelt, whether of Tyrian king or Tyrian workman, in Chronicles, except, perhaps, in 1 Chron. xiv. 1. Elsewhere the name is written חִירָם, or sometimes חִירוֹם, instead of חוּרָם. Gesenius draws attention to Josephus's Greek rendering of the name, Εἴρωμος, with whom agree Menander, an historian of Ephesus, in a fragment respecting Hiram (Josephus, 'Contra Apion,' i. 18); and Dius, a fragment of whose history of the Phœnicians telling of Solomon and Hiram, Josephus also is the means of preserving ('Contra Apion,' i. 17). The Septuagint write the name Χιράμ; the Alexandrian, Χειράμ; the Vulgate, *Hiram*. The name of Hiram's father was Abibaal. Hiram himself began to reign, according to Menander, when nineteen years of age, reigned thirty-four years (B.C. 1023—990), and died therefore at the age of fifty-three. Of Hiram and his reign in Tyre very little is known beyond what is so familiar to us from the Bible history of David and Solomon. The city of Tyre is among the most ancient. Though it is not mentioned in Homer, yet the Sidonians, who lived in such close connection with the Tyrians, are mentioned there ('Iliad,' vi. 290; xxiii. 743; 'Odys.,' iv. 84; xxii. 424), whilst Virgil calls Tyre the Sidonian city, Sidon being twenty miles distant ('Æn.,' i. 12, 677; iv. 545). The modern name of Tyre is *Sur*. The city was situate on the east coast of the Mediterranean, in Phœnicia, about seventy-four geographical miles north of Joppa, while the road distance from Joppa to Jerusalem was thirty-two miles. The first Bible mention of Tyre is in Josh. xix. 29. After that the more characteristic mentions of it are 2 Sam. v. 11, with all its parallels; xxiv. 7; Isa. xxiii. 1, 7; Ezek. xxvi. 2; xxvii. 1—8; Zech. ix. 2, 3. Tyre was celebrated for its working in copper and brass, and by no means only for its coins and timber felling. The good terms and intimacy subsisting between Solomon and the King of Tyre speak themselves very plainly in Bible history, without leaving us dependent on doubtful history, or tales of such as Josephus ('Ant.,' viii. 5. § 3; 'Contra Apion,' i. 17). For the timber, metals, workmen, given by Hiram to Solomon, Solomon gave to Hiram corn and oil, ceded to him some cities, and the use of some ports on the Red Sea (1 Kings ix. 11—14, 25—28; x. 21—23. See also 1 Kings xvi. 31). As thou didst deal with David . . . and didst send him cedars. To this vers. 7 and 8 are the apodosis manifestly, while vers. 4, 5, 6 should be enclosed in brackets.

Ver. 4.—In the nine headings contained in this verse we may consider that the leading religious observances and services of the nation are summarized. To dedicate it. The more frequent rendering of the Hebrew word here used is "to hallow," or "to sanctify." (1) Sweet incense (see Exod. xxx. 1, 6—9, 34—38; xxxvii. 25—29; Ps. cxli. 2; Rev. v. 8; vi. 9; viii. 3—5). This sweet incense, compounded of the four ingredients stacte, onycha, galbanum, pure frankincense, was to be burnt morning and evening, at the time of the morning and evening sacrifices on the altar made of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, which stood in the holy place facing the ark, with the table of shewbread on the one hand, and the golden candlestick on the other. While the act of atonement was set forth by the offering of the victim on the brazen altar in the outer court, the ascending, acceptable, and accepted prayer and aspiration of the congregation were expressed by the sweet incense-burning. (2) The continual shewbread (מַעֲרֶכֶת תָּמִיד). The elementary meaning of the word here rendered "shewbread" is "a ranging in order," whether the "order" might be, *e.g.*, that of an army in battle array (1 Sam. iv. 16; xvii. 8, 22, 48), or of the lamps of the holy candlestick (Exod. xxxix. 37), or of pilings of wood to be burnt on the altar (Judg. vi. 26), or of cakes of bread, as presumably here and in some parallel passages (Lev. xxiv. 6). For the table which was to carry these cakes, see Exod. xxv. 23—30; xxxvii. 10—16; the last verse of the former passage speaking of the shewbread under the name לֶחֶם פָּנִים. (For the position of the table, see Exod. xxvi. 35.) The word employed in the text is first used to express the piles of cakes, called in our Authorized Version shewbread in Lev xxiv. 6, 7; then 1 Chron. ix. 32; xxiii. 29; xxviii. 16; as also again in ch. xiii. 11; xxix. 18; and in Neh. x. 33. Where in these passages the word לֶחֶם is not expressed, that it *is* understood may be gathered from the other passages (Numb. iv. 7). The bread consisted of twelve large cakes of unleavened dough (Lev. xxiv. 5—9), ranged in two heaps, and with a golden cup of frankincense (Lev. xxiv. 7) to each pile. When on every seventh day new cakes were substituted, the old ones belonged to the priests (Lev. xxiv. 8, 9; viii. 31; Matt. xii. 4; Exod. xxix. 33, 34). The twelve cakes pointed to the twelve tribes. Their size may be judged from the statement that each cake contained two tenth deals, *i.e.* two-tenths of an ephah, equal to about six pounds and a quarter. The exact significance of this bread is not stated in Scripture. Part of it lay plainly in the twelve cakes, part, perhaps, in their becoming priest's food, found by the people (Lev. xxiv. 8), after having been presented seven days before the Lord. Much that is interesting but not finally satisfactory on the question may be found in the article "Shewbread" in Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1271. Our Authorized Version "shewbread" comes from Luther's *Schaubrode*. Wickliffe, after the Vulgate *panes propositionis*, designates it "the loaves of proposition." The New Testament has, in Heb. ix. 2, ἡ προθέσις τῶν ἄρτων; as also in the Gospels (Matt. xii. 4; Luke vi. 4); while the Septuagint has ἄρτοι ἐνώπιοι (Exod. xxv. 30), and ἄρτοι τῆς προσφορᾶς (1 Kings vii. 48). The question really turns on the significance of the designation of Exod. xxv. 30 (לֶחֶם פָּנִים). (3) The burnt offerings morning and evening. A succinct statement of these offerings, constituting the "daily offering," is given in Numb. xxviii. 3—8, according to its original institution (Exod. xxix. 38—42), except in the added mention of the "strong wine," or strong drink, spoken of in the latter part of ver. 7, which had probably originated as an incident of the wilderness-journey. The morning and evening offering were alike, viz. a lamb, a meal offering consisting of a tenth of an ephah of flour, mixed with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil, and a drink offering consisting of the fourth part of a hin of "wine," or of "strong drink." (4) The burnt offering on the sabbath. The account of this is given in Numb. xxviii. 9, 10; and any previous institution of it is *not* recorded. The sabbath-day burnt offerings were the double of the daily offerings (Ezek. xlvi. 4). (5) The burnt offering on the new moons; see Numb. xxvii. 11—15, where the phrase, "the beginnings of your months," is what is employed, *i.e.* the first day of each month (Lev. x. 10). No previous mention of this burnt offering is found. It consisted of two bullocks, one ram, seven lambs, (*a*) with meat offering consisting of *three*-tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with oil for each bullock; two-tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with oil for the ram; one-tenth of an ephah of flour similarly mixed for each lamb; (*b*) with drink offering, of half a hin of wine to each bullock; the third part of a hin to the ram; and the fourth part of a hin to each lamb. A kid of the goats for a *sin* offering, which in fact was offered *before* the burnt offering. And all these were to be additional to the *continual* offering of the day, with its drink offering (see also Isa. lxvi. 23; Ezek. xlvi. 3; Amos viii. 5). (6) The burnt offering on the solemn feasts of the Lord. These were the three great festivals of the year—the *Passover* (Exod. xii. 3—20, 27, 43; Lev. xxiii. 4—8; Deut. xvi. 1—8); the *Feast of Weeks* (Exod. xxiii. 16; xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 15—21; Numb. xxviii. 26; Deut. xvi. 8—12); the *Feast of Tabernacles* (Exod. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 33—44; Numb. xxix. 13—40; Deut. xvi. 13—15).

Vers. 5, 6.—The contents of these verses beg some special observation, in the first place, as having been judged by the writer of Chronicles matter desirable to be retained and put in his work. To find a place for *this* subject amid his careful selection, and rejection in many cases, of the matter at his command, is certainly a decision in harmony with his general design in this work. Then, again, they may be remarked on as spoken to another king, who, whether it were to be expected or no, was, it is plain, a sympathizing hearer of the piety and religious resolution of Solomon (ver. 12). This is one of the touches of history that does not diminish our regret that we do not know more of Hiram. He was no "proselyte," but he had the sympathy of a convert to the religion of the Jew. Perhaps the simplest and most natural explanation may just be the truest, that Hiram for some long time had seen "the rising" kingdom, and alike in David and Solomon in turn, "the coming" men. He had been more calmly and deliberately impressed than the Queen of Sheba afterwards, but not less effectually and operatively impressed. And once more the passage is noteworthy for the utterances of Solomon in themselves. As parenthetically testifying to a powerful man, who could be a powerful helper of Solomon's enterprise, his outburst of explanation, and of ardent religious purpose, and of humble godly awe, is natural. But that he should call the temple he purposed to build "so great," as we cannot put it down either to intentional exaggeration or to sober historic fact, must the rather be honestly set down to such considerations as these, viz. that in point of fact, neither David nor Solomon were "travelled men," as Joseph and Moses, for instance. Their measures of greatness were largely dependent upon the existing material and furnishing of their own little country. And further, Solomon speaks of the temple as great very probably from the point of view of its simple religious uses (note end of ver. 6) as the place of sacrifice in especial rather than as a place, for instance, of vast congregations and vast processions. Then, too, as compared with the tabernacle, it would loom "great," whether for size or for its enduring material. Meantime, though Solomon does indeed use the words (ver. 5), "The house . . . is great," yet, throwing on the words the light of the remaining clause of the verse, and of David's words in 1 Chron. xxix. 1, it is not very certain that the main thing present to his mind was *not* the size, but rather the *character* of the house, and the solemn character of the *enterprise* itself (1 Kings viii. 27; ch. vi. 18). **Who am I . . . save only to burn sacrifice before him?** The drift of Solomon's thought is plain—that nothing would justify mortal man, if he purported to build really a palace of residence for him whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, but that he is justified all the more in "not giving sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, until he had found out a place" (Ps. cxxxii. 4, 5) where man might acceptably, in God's *appointed way*, draw near to him. If "earth draw near to heaven," it may be confidently depended on that heaven will not be slow to bend down its glory, majesty, grace, to earth.

Ver. 7.—**Send me . . . a man cunning to work, etc.** The parenthesis is now ended. By comparison of ver. 3, it appears that Solomon makes of Hiram's services to David his father a very plea why his own requests addressed now to Hiram should be granted. If we may be guided by the *form* of the expressions used in 1 Chron. xiv. 1 and 2 Sam. v. 11, 12, Hiram had in the first instance volunteered help to David, and had not waited to be applied to by David. This would show us more clearly the force of Solomon's plea. Further, if we note the language of 1 Kings v. 1, we may be disposed to think that it fills a gap in our present connection, and indicates that, though Solomon appears here to have had to take the initiative, an easy opportunity was opened, in the courteous embassy sent him in the persons of Hiram's "servants." That the king of this most privileged, separate, and exclusive people of Israel (and he the one who conducted that people to the very zenith of their fame) should have to apply and be permitted to apply to foreign and, so to say, heathen help, in so intrinsic a matter as the finding of the "cunning" and the "skill" of head and hand for the most sacred and distinctive *chef d'œuvre* of the said exclusive nation, is a grand instance of nature breaking all trammels, even when most divinely purposed, and a grand token of the dawning comity of nations, of free-trade under the unlikeliest auspices, and of the brotherhood of humanity, never more broadly illustrated than when on an international scale. The competence of the Phœnicians and the people of Sidon and those over whom Hiram immediately reigned in the working of the metals, and furthermore in a very wide range of other subjects, is well sustained by the allusions of very various authorities (already instanced under 1 Chron. xiv. 1, and *passim*; Homer, 'Iliad,' vi. 289—294; xxiii. 743; 'Odys.,' iv. 614; xv. 415—426; Herod., iii. 19; vii. 23, 44, 96; Strabo, xvi. 2. § 23). The man who was sent is described in vers. 13, 14, *infra*, as also 1 Kings vii. 13, 14. Purple, ... crimson, ... blue. It is not absolutely necessary to suppose that the same Hiram, so skilled in working of gold, silver, brass, and iron, was *the* authority sent for these matters of various coloured dyes for the cloths that would later on be required for curtains and other similar purposes in the temple. So far, indeed, as the literal construction of the words go, this would seem to be what is meant, and no doubt *may* have been the case, though unlikely. The *purple* (אַרְגְּוָן). A Chaldee form of this word (אַרְגְּוָנָא) occurs three times in Dan. v. 7, 16, 29, and appears in each of these cases in our Authorized Version as "scarlet." Neither of these words is the word used in the numerous passages of Exodus, Numbers, Judges, Esther, Proverbs, Canticles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, nor, indeed, in ver. 13, *infra* and ch. iii. 14. In all these places, numbering nearly forty, the word is אַרְגָּמָן. The purple was probably obtained from some shell-fish on the coast of the Mediterranean. The *crimson* (כַּרְמִיל). Gesenius says that this was a colour obtained from multitudinous insects that tenanted one kind of the ilex (*Coccus ilicis*), and that the word is from the Persian language. The Persian *kerm*, Sanscrit *krimi*, Armenian *karmir*, German *carmesin*, and our own "crimson," keep the same framework of letters or sound to a remarkable degree. This word is found only here, ver. 13, *infra*, and ch. iii. 14. The *crimson* of Isa. i. 18 and Jer. iv. 30, and the *scarlet* of some forty places in the Pentateuch and other books, come as the rendering of the word שָׁנִי. The *blue* (תְּכֵלֶת). This is the same word as is used in some fifty other passages in Exodus, Numbers, and in later books. This colour was obtained from a shell-fish (*Helix ianthina*) found in the Mediterranean, the shell of which was blue. Can skill to grave. The word "to grave" is the piel conjugation of the very familiar Hebrew verb פָּתַח, "to open." Out of twenty-nine times that the verb occurs in some part of the piel conjugation, it is translated "grave" nine times, "loosed" eleven times, "put off" twice, "ungirded" once, "opened" four times, "appear" once, and "go free" once. Perhaps the "opening" the ground with the plough (Isa. xxviii. 24) leads most easily on to the idea of "engraving." Cunning men whom . . . David . . . did provide. As we read in 1 Chron. xxii. 15; xxviii. 21.

Ver. 8.—Algum trees out of Lebanon. These trees are called algum in the three passages of Chronicles in which the tree is mentioned, viz. here and ch. ix. 10, 11; but in the three passages of Kings, *almug*, viz. 1 Kings x. 11, 12 *bis*. As we read in 1 Kings x. 11; ch. ix. 10, 11, that they were experts from Ophir, we are arrested by the expression, "out of Lebanon," here. If they were accessible in Lebanon, it is not on the face of it to be supposed they would be ordered from such a distance as Ophir. Lastly, there is very great difference of opinion as to what the tree was in itself. In Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' vol. iii. appendix, p. vi., the subject is discussed more fully than it can be here, and with some of its scientific technicalities. Celsius has mentioned fifteen woods for which the honour has been claimed. More modern disputants have suggested five, of these the red sandalwood being considered, perhaps, the likeliest. So great an authority as Dr. Hooker pronounces that it is a question quite undetermined. But inasmuch as it is so undetermined, it would seem possible that, if it were a precious wood of the smaller kind (as e.g. cherry with us) wood, so to say, of shy growth in Lebanon, it might be that it did grow in Lebanon, but that a very insufficient supply of it there was customarily supplemented by the imports received from Ophir. Or, again, it may be that the words, "out of Lebanon," are simply misplaced (1 Kings v. 8), and should follow the words, "fir trees." The rendering "pillars" in 1 Kings x. 12 for "rails" or "props" is unfortunate, as the other quoted uses of the wood for "harps" and "psalteries" would all betoken a *small* as well as very hard wood. Lastly, it is a suggestion of Canon Rawlinson that, inasmuch as the almug wood of Ophir came *viâ* Phœnicia and Hiram, Solomon may very possibly have been ignorant that "Lebanon" was not its proper *habitat*. Thy servants can skill to cut timber. This same testimony is expressed yet more strongly in 1 Kings v. 6, "There is not any among us that can skill to hew timber like the Sidonians." Passages like 2 Kings xix. 23; Isa. xiv. 8; xxxvii. 24, go to show that the verb employed in our text is rightly rendered "hew," as referring to the *felling* rather than to any subsequent dressing and sawing up of the timber. It is, therefore, rather more a point of interest to learn in *what* the great skill consisted which so threw Israelites into the shade, while distinguishing Hiram's servants. It is, of course, quite possible that the "hewing," or "felling," may be taken to *infer* all the subsequent cutting, dressing, etc. Perhaps *the* skill intended will have included the best selection of trees, as well as the neatest and quickest laying of them prostrate, and if beyond this it included the sawing and dressing and shaping of the wood, the room for superiority of skill would be ample. **My servants** (see vers. 2, 18; 1 Kings v. 15).

Ver. 10.—**Beaten wheat.** In 1 Kings v. 11 the language is "wheat *for* food" (מַכֹּלֶת), while the Septuagint gives *καὶ μαχείρ*. In our present passage the Septuagint gives *εἰς βρώματα*, suggesting at once that our Hebrew מַכּוֹת is an error for מַכֹּלֶת. The former Hebrew word is that constantly employed for "plagues," "strokes," etc., and it is nowhere but in this place rendered "beaten." **I will give to thy servants.** This passage is hard to reconcile with what is said in 1 Kings v. 11; but meantime it is not certain that it needs to be reconciled with it. It is possible that the two passages are distinct. The contents of the present verse, at all events, need not be credited with any ambiguity, unless, indeed, we would wish it more definite, whether the expression, "I will give *to* thy servants," may not be quite as correctly understood, "*for* thy servants," *i.e.* to *thee* as the hire of them. If this be so, it would enable us to give at once *all the wheat*, and *two hundred* out of the 20,000 baths of oil, for the consumption, not of the literal workmen, but of the royal household. Then this granted, the verse, though not identical with 1 Kings v. 11, is brought into harmony with it. Reverting to the statement in 1 Kings v., what we learn is that Solomon, in his application to Hiram, offers payment for the hire of his servants such as he shall appoint (ver. 6). Hiram's reply is that he shall be satisfied to receive as payment "food *for his household*" (ver. 9), the amount of it and the annual payment of it being specified in ver. 11. This is the whole case, the discrepancies in which are plain, but they do not amount to contradictions. The appearance that is worn on the face of things is that the writer in Chronicles gives what came to be the final arrangement as to remuneration, though confessedly it is placed as much as the account in Kings in the draft of Solomon's original application to Hiram. **Measures.** These were *cors*, and the cor was the same as the *homer*. From a calculation of some doubtfulness, however, made under the suggestions of 1 Kings iv. 22, it has been said that the consumption of the royal household of *Solomon* was above 32,000 measures. The cor, or homer, was the largest of the five dry measures of capacity, being equal to 180 *cabs*, 100 *omers*, 30 *seahs*, 10 *ephahs* (see Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1741), though what was the exact value of any one of these in modern measures has only been uncertainly and very approximately arrived at. **Baths.** The bath was the largest of the three liquid measures of capacity, being equal to 6 *hins* and 72 *logs* (see same 'Dictionary,' iii. 1740).

Ver. 11.—**Huram . . . answered in writing.** It is impossible to argue with any but superficial plausibility that Solomon had *not* used writing. In the parallel of Kings an identical expression is used for the communications of both: "Solomon sent to Hiram" (ver. 2), and "Hiram sent to Solomon" (ver. 8). The productions of the forms of this correspondence by Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' viii. 2) and Eupolemus ('Ap. Præp. Evang.,' ix. 33) are, of course, merely mythical. **Because the Lord hath loved his people.** This beautiful expression has parallels, not only in such passages as ch. ix. 8; 1 Kings x. 9; but in such as Deut. vii. 13; x. 15; Ps. xlvii. 4; cxv. 12; Jer. xxxi. 3; Hos. xi. 1, 4. These were all precursors of the fuller assertion and kinder demonstration of God's love repeated so often and in such tender connections in the Epistles of the New Testament. This verse and the following are also testimony to the indirect influences on surrounding nations of the knowledge of the one true Creator-God and Ruler-God, that was domiciled by special revelation and oracle (Rom. iii. 2) with Israel. Where nations near were bitter foes, they often feared Israel's God, whereas now they were friends they could summon to their lips the highest of the outbursts of praise, not to say of adoration. The very noteworthy sympathy of Hiram with Israel may have owed something to his personal predilection for David (1 Kings v. 1). And *this* again is convincing testimony to the worth and usefulness of individual character which here influenced the destiny of two whole nations.

Ver. 13.—**Of Huram my father's.** The words of ch. iv. 11, 16 would invest these with suspicion, if nothing that occurred before did, as *e.g.* the parallel passage (1 Kings vii. 13, 14, 40). There can be no doubt from these passages that the name Huram of this verse is the name of the workman sent (the *lamed* prefixed being only the objective sign), not the supposed name of King Hiram's father, which, as already seen, was Abibaal. But the following word translated "my father" (אָבִי) is less easily explained; ch. iv. 16 ("*his* father") is quite sufficient to negative the rendering "father" altogether. In our text altogether inappropriate, it may be called there altogether impossible. It has been proposed to render it as a proper name *Abi*, or as an affix of honour, *Ab*, equal to "master." However, Gesenius (in 'Lexicon,' *sub voc.* אב (6), which see) furnishes a signification, "chief counsellor," which (taking it to mean chief counsellor, or as it were expert, chief referee, or even only *foreman* in such matters as might be in question) would well suit all the passages, and remove all difficulty.

Ver. 14.—**Son of a woman . . . of Dan.** Both this and the parallel (1 Kings vii. 14) agree as to the father of this very clever workman, that he was "a man of Tyre." But the parallel gives the mother as a woman "of the tribe of Naphtali," and calls her a "widow." This must mean, either that she was a widow *now*, or that she was a widow when "the man of Tyre" married her. If this latter is the correct meaning, it has been suggested that, though the mother was really a woman of the daughters of Dan, yet the husband who, dying, left her a widow, was of the tribe of Naphtali, and that from this *she* became credited with belonging to that tribe. It would seem not altogether impossible that it may be intended to state, in a delicate way, that this remarkably able man was the natural son of the widow in question, "the man of Tyre" (not called *her husband*) being the father. On the intermarriages of Danites and Phoenicians, see Blunt's 'Coincidences,' pt. 2. iv. **Skilful . . . to find out every device.** (For the identical phrase, see Exod. xxxi. 4.) The present verse, exceeding in definiteness ver. 7, *supra*, undoubtedly purports on the face of it to ascribe a very wide range of practical skill, and not merely general administrative and directing skill, to Hiram. Note, however, the significance couched in the last clauses of both verses.

Ver. 15.—The contents of this verse cannot be supposed to imply that King Hiram is eager for the pay to be remembered, but are equivalent to saying promptly that all things are ready to begin, and that therefore the commissariat must be ready also.

Ver. 16.—**Joppa.** This was one of the most ancient of towns, and is referred to by Pliny ('Hist. Nat.,' v. 13), as "Joppa Phoenicum, antiquior terrarum inundatione, ut ferunt." Its name (יָפוֹ, "beauty") is said to have been justified by the beautiful groves in its neighbourhood. It is mentioned Josh. xix. 46 as Japho, where also we learn the circumstances under which the Dan tribe were possessed of it. It is remarkable that it is not mentioned again till our present verse, not even in the parallel (1 Kings v. 9). But it appears again in Ezra iii. 7; Jonah i. 3, and in several places in the Acts of the Apostles. The modern name of it is *Jaffa*, and it is not reputed as a good port now. It was distant from Jerusalem some thirty-four miles. The carriage of the timber this road-journey is nowhere described in detail, nor is the exact spot of the coast west of Lebanon mentioned where the flotes were made, and thence despatched.

Ver. 17.—**Strangers.** By these are meant those of the former inhabitants and possessors of the land, who had not been extirpated or driven out. Special regulations respecting them are recorded in Judg. i. 21—28, 33—36. But these had largely lapsed till, as it appears, David revived them rather trenchantly, and David is now followed by Solomon (ch. viii. 7, 8; 1 Kings ix. 20, 21). The very much milder enforcement of labour upon the Israelites themselves is evident from 1 Kings v. 13—16. **After the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them.** Of this transaction on the part of David we do not possess any absolutely distinct statement. But the place of it is sufficiently evident, as indicated in 1 Chron. xxii. 2.

Ver. 18.—**Three thousand and six hundred.** Adding to these the 250 of ch. viii. 10, *infra*, the total 3850 of 1 Kings v. 16 is exactly reached. That total, however, is reached by a somewhat different classification, the division being into 3300 "strangers," and 500 "chief of the officers" (1 Kings ix. 23). The explanation probably is that of the 3600 "stranger" overseers, the small proportion of 300 were of much higher grade in office than the rest, and were ranked by the writer in Kings with those overseers (250) of Solomon, who were probably Israelites.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—This chapter, in a homiletic point of view, invites attention to *those methods* (or some of them) *of religious enterprise which go to ensure success and to issue in real usefulness.* For we may notice here—

1. THE REPEATED RECORD, ON THE PART OF SOLOMON, OF HIS RESOLUTION OR DETERMINATION. "Solomon determined." The enterprise "of building a house to the Name of the Lord" had been set before him. He knew it had been in his father's mind. He had heard it in the earnest tones of a father's prayer. He had listened to the urgent, loving, proud tones of a father's charge to a son. He had, no doubt, said

"Yes" with lip and heart. But now after coronation, vision, prayer, and gracious promise, he takes up the enterprise, and lifts up the responsibility, and makes the resolution all his own.

II. THE ADDING TO RESOLUTION THE COMMENCEMENT OF ACTUAL WORK. Resolutions there have often been, and strong ones, determinations alike deliberate and enthusiastic, which nevertheless have gone the same way by which, to a proverb, mere good intentions so very frequently go! Solomon's immediate setting to work is by far the simplest, surest safeguard. He makes the preparations nearest to hand, and that were within his own command. He seeks the help of others at a distance, both forecasting his own needs for the work, and also drawing upon memories of his father's doings and his father's experiences.

III. SUCH BEGINNING OF ACTUAL WORK AS WAS PROOF AGAINST THAT FERTILE SOURCE OF FAILURE THAT COMES OF STUMBLING ON THE THRESHOLD. Early disappointments go a long way toward disheartenment. And early disappointments originate most frequently in one or both of two causes—viz. in letting things drift, go by default, or take their own chance; or, on the other hand, in a busy disorder. Many a promising work of a man of good intention has been wrecked in these ways. But here there was order in what Solomon did at home, and distinctness and order in what he asked for far away from home. And it all told. All helped him and his work to find favour with God and man.

Lastly, TWO GREAT TRIBUTARIES TO SUCCESS IN THE MORAL QUALITIES WHICH SOLOMON EXHIBITS, as shown in: 1. The great respect he has to "the ordinance for ever to Israel," which centred in "the house to the Name of the Lord," to be dedicated to him, with all its various services (ver. 4). 2. The humble estimate he rightly entertains of himself, in all comparison of the work which he had to do, and him for whom it was to be done (vers. 5, 6).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The three elements in human purpose.* "And Solomon *determined* to build a house," etc. And whence came this purpose of the king's heart? From the depths of his own soul; or were there not other elements besides that of his own volition? This determination which is here chronicled as a simple act of one mind was, as most of our resolutions are, more complex in its character than it seemed.

I. THE OUTSIDE HUMAN ELEMENTS—the human element which is outside ourselves. In this case David's influence had much, very much to do with it. It was he who initiated the work (2 Sam. vii. 2). Moreover, he urged Solomon to proceed with it after his own death, and even laid by stores in partial preparation for it (1 Chron. xxii. 11, 14). Solomon, in "determining" to build a house, was really resolving to go on with an undertaking which he had already promised his father to carry out. Who shall tell how much the thought and the desire of other people influence the choices we are making, and consequently the course we are pursuing? Perhaps it is very seldom indeed that we "determine" to enter a new path without owing much to the influence of others; it may be, as in Solomon's case, to the action of a past generation, or it may be to that of our contemporaries and companions. Only he who searches the most secret chambers of the soul can tell how much of our best resolves is due to the influence of our best friends.

II. THE DIVINE ELEMENT. God had already given his distinct sanction and encouragement to the proceeding (2 Sam. vii. 13). And this Divine decision, communicated by the Prophet Nathan, must have had a very powerful weight in Solomon's determination. It would seem to be enough, of itself, to decide the matter. How much God has to do with our decisions we do not know, but probably more than we ordinarily imagine. We often and earnestly ask him to affect our mind and will by the enlightenment and influence of his own Spirit; we believe that he has access to us and power over us, and can touch and quicken us at his will. Why should we not believe that he is frequently, continually with us, acting upon us, controlling and directing us, powerfully and graciously affecting our determinations and our character?

III. THE INDIVIDUAL ELEMENT. However much in Solomon's decision was due to the sources, Divine and human, outside himself, there was room left for his own individuality. *He* determined to proceed with the work. It was not under compulsion, but with the full consent of his own mind, that he began and continued and completed the noble task. He gave himself to it, he threw his strength into it; so much had he to do with it that it could be said with truth that "Solomon built him a house." When all other influences are taken into the account, it still remains true that our actions are our own; that ultimately *we* determine upon the course which honours or dishonours our life, which makes or mars our character, which ensures or spoils our prospects.

In view of these three elements in human purpose, there is ground for: 1. *Gratitude;* for we owe much of our most fruitful actions to the suggestion and counsel of our friends. 2. *Humility;* for we owe more than we know or think to the inspiration of God. 3. A deep *sense of responsibility;* for it is in the depths of our own nature we are determining the complexion of our life and the destiny of our soul.—C.

Vers. 2, 3, 7—10.—*Human labour.* Concerning the work in which we are engaged as men of action and production, we have here four suggestions.

I. THE AMPLITUDE OF MATERIAL WITH WHICH GOD HAS SUPPLIED US. We have mention made (ver. 7) of different metals—gold, silver, brass, iron; and this enumeration is far from being exhaustive. We have reference (ver. 8) to different trees; and these are only a reminder of all the kinds of timber to be had in the forests of the earth. We have a statement of articles of food (ver. 10), representing various industries; and these again are only suggestive of a large number at our command. The Divine Author of our nature and Builder of our home has given us many tastes and cravings; he has also supplied us with the most ample material on which our skill and our labour can be expended, so that all our wants and even our wishes may be supplied.

II. THE NECESSITY, DIVINELY ORDERED, FOR CORDIAL CO-OPERATION. Solomon had to negotiate with Hiram; the skilled labour of Israel had to be supplemented with the more skilled labour of Tyre (vers. 3, 8). The servants of one sovereign had to "be with," to co-operate with, those of another, if the house was to be built. And not only had land to work with land, but citizen with citizen, according to individual culture; some had to "bear burdens," others to "hew trees," others to overlook both of these workmen (ver. 2). As one country produces valuable commodities which another lacks; and as one man has a natural faculty of which another is devoid; as the interchange of products and of industries is spreading comfort and acquisition;—we are learning that God has so made this earth and so constituted us, his children, that we may work together, and make one another inheritors of the results of our thought and toil. Commerce is not more human in its outworking than it is Divine in its origin.

III. THE GRADATIONS IN LABOUR. To overlook implies more trained intelligence than manual labour itself involves (ver. 2). And men "cunning to work" and men that had skill to hew (ver. 8) were superior workman to those that did the labour of carrying. Work has its gradations; it ascends in rank as it involves natural intelligence and sagacity, long and careful training, faithfulness and trustworthiness.

IV. THE ADVANTAGE OF INTEGRITY TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER US. (Ver. 3.) Solomon invited Hiram to treat with him "as thou didst deal with David my father." And Hiram responded; for we read (1 Kings v. 1), "Hiram was ever a lover of David." He found that he could trust the King of Israel—that with him piety meant truthfulness and equity. Thus David's integrity made the path of Solomon smooth and easy; it perhaps contributed as much to the work as the various materials he had so carefully stored up for his son. It is impossible to reckon how much thoroughness and uprightness in our labour have to do with our own real success, and how much they do for those who come after us. In this way one generation truly serves another.

V. THE RIGHTEOUS CLAIM OF LABOUR TO A FULL RECOMPENSE. (Ver. 10.) "The workman is worthy of his hire" (see Jas. v. 4).

VI. OUR DUTY TO DO OUR BEST. "The house shall be wonderfully great" (ver. 9). Solomon meant to make it worthy, not only of himself and his kingdom, but even, as far as that might be, of the Lord for whom it was to be erected. It should be constructed of the best materials and with the greatest skill he could command. 1. What we do in the direct service of God has a distinct claim on our highest faculties, on our largest resources. What we do for Christ should be done at the full height of our capacity and opportunity. In his worship and service we should be at our very best.

2. All work, as rendered unto God, should be done faithfully and heartily. Into all the labour of our hands we should put our mind and our strength, because everything *is* done in the presence of the Master, and *should* be done with a view to his approval.—C.

Vers. 4—6.—*The acceptableness of the imperfect.* The letter which Solomon wrote to Hiram was one that contained more than a business proposal; it was something beyond the opening of a negotiation; it included some valuable truth which not only may have benefited the then King of Tyre, but may be of real value to us at this date and this distance. For it intimated—

I. THE INESTIMABLE ADVANTAGE OF THE REVEALED RELIGION OVER CONTEMPORARY FAITHS. "Great is our God above all gods" (ver. 5). Great indeed; for he was the living God, and they were only imaginary; he was the holy God, and they were (by supposition) unholy; he was just and kind, and they were capricious and cruel; he could and did hear and answer prayer, and they were powerless and helpless. Who could estimate the priceless advantage to the nation of having for the object of its worship the Lord God of Israel? It makes a difference which is simply incalculable to have as the Object of our worship a Being who is worthy of our devotion. What, then, is it to us to be worshipping the Divine Father revealed to us in and by Jesus Christ? 1. It is to be seeking the favour of that Living One who holds us all in his mighty hand, and is able and is willing to confer upon us inestimable blessings, even unto eternal life. 2. It is to be drawing nigh unto, and to be drawn spiritually towards, the Holy One; it is thus to be attracted in spirit, in sympathy, in character, in life, toward the Perfect One; it is to be gradually, unconsciously, effectually transformed into his likeness. For whom we reverence, we follow; whom we love, we resemble; and just as we worship the Divine Father and love the Divine Friend, so shall we breathe his spirit and bear his likeness.

II. THE IMPERFECTNESS OF THE MATERIAL AND OF THE HUMAN, IN VIEW OF THE DIVINE GREATNESS. 1. *The material.* "Who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven . . . cannot contain him?" The temple of a heathen deity may be supposed by its ignorant devotees to be its residence; it certainly contains its visible image, the idol. But the temple Solomon was about to build could in no true sense become the residence of Jehovah. No building could contain him; "the heaven of heavens" could not do that: how much less an earthly house! There is no cathedral, no Christian sanctuary, that can be properly thought of as the residence or earthly home of Jesus Christ. The heaven where he dwells cannot contain *him.* 2. *The human.* "Who am I, that I should build," etc? To be the principal agent in the construction of the one building with which the Name of Jehovah would be associated, and the only building where there would be (1) an abiding manifestation of his presence, and (2) the opportunity of approaching him by sacrifice,—this was an honour of which Solomon naturally and becomingly considered himself unworthy. And who among the holiest and the wisest of men, who among the most faithful servants of Jesus Christ, can consider himself worthy to be (1) the spokesman of his brethren in drawing nigh to God in prayer; (2) the messenger to make known the love and grace of God as manifested in Jesus Christ his Son; (3) the workman in even the humblest corner of that sacred and blessed field—the field of Christian service? To be thus engaged for the Father of spirits, for the Redeemer of mankind, should be considered by us all an honour of which we are wholly unworthy.

III. THE ACCEPTABLENESS OF IMPERFECT SERVICE. 1. Though the temple at Jerusalem could not contain God, yet it could render various valuable services (vers. 4, 6). It was a place where God met with and manifested himself to the people; where they drew consciously near to him, and realized that he was very near to them; where they communed with him and rejoiced before him, where they sought and found forgiveness of their sins; where they made grateful acknowledgment of their indebtedness to him for all blessings; and where they dedicated themselves anew to his service. Imperfect as it was, and utterly unable to constitute the residence of Deity, it yet answered most useful ends. 2. And thus with us who are the servants of God. Imperfection marks our character and our work; we are not worthy to "build him a house," nor to do anything, however humble, in his name and cause. Yet God will bless us, Christ will own and honour us as his servants, if only we are loyal and true. "To the wicked God says, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" etc. (Ps. l. 16). But to the upright in heart (including the penitent, see Ps. li. 12, 13), to all those who have returned in spirit to him, and who sincerely desire to extend his reign over the hearts of men, he is ever saying, "Go, work in my vineyard; go, build up my kingdom; go, gather my erring sons and daughters, and lead them home to my heart."—C.

Ver. 11.—*God's care for the country.* "Because the Lord hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them." We reach our subject by the remembrance of—

I. GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL IN RESPECT OF THE MONARCHY UP TO SOLOMON'S TIME. It has to be considered: 1. That for a visible human sovereignty God held the people themselves responsible. He did not impose it; nor did he suggest it; nor did he desire it; on the other hand, by the mouth of his servant Samuel, he strongly dissuaded from it (see 1 Sam. viii.). 2. That, granting their request, God gave them a king on their own chosen principle. They demanded a sovereign they could *see* and *hear*, one that would be a king "after the flesh;" and on this fleshly and material principle God selected one that had *bodily* advantages (see 1 Sam. x. 23, 24). 3. That, when Saul failed, God had pity upon them, and gave them a man after his own choice—a man who had, truly, some serious defects—as who had not?—but who, by the fascination of his bearing, by the courage and capacity of his leadership, by his unswerving loyalty to his God, bound the nation together, overcame its numerous enemies, extended its borders, and held it fast to the service of Jehovah. And now God had given to the people David's son, Solomon. And we look at—

II. GOD'S GIFT TO ISRAEL IN PREFERRING SOLOMON TO THE THRONE. It was a Divine appointment, that made for: 1. *National piety.* Solomon regarded as the great act of his reign the "building a house for the Name of the Lord." And the erection of the temple and the subsequent arrangement of its services did much to bind the people, not of Jerusalem only but of the entire kingdom, to the worship of Jehovah. It promoted national piety by securing the adherence of the people to the service of the true and living God. And this piety meant more than worship; it meant purity also, a sound morality. For no man could be an acceptable worshipper of Jehovah who did not renounce iniquity and seek after righteousness and blamelessness of life. 2. *National peace.* Solomon, true to his name, was a man of peace. The nation had known enough of war under David; it required peace, and this Solomon gave it. In this matter almost everything then and there depended upon the character and spirit of the monarch. A war-like king would create national hostilities; a peace-loving king ensured national rest from strife. We know what war means; it *may* mean glory, enlargement, enrichment; it *must* mean cruelty, passion, pain, death, desolation in heart and home; it must mean an arrest laid upon national industry and enterprise. But by the promotion of Solomon God was providing for: 3. *National industry.* During his reign a great stimulus was given to the industrial arts and to the commerce of the country. Israel opened its eyes to see what it had not had any glimpse of before, and an immense stride was taken in the path of civilization and production.

Thus God cared for the country which he had especially made his own. Thus he cares for all countries, when he raises up men that seek the piety (and with that the morality), the peace, the industry, of the people. Thus shall we be truly working with God when we live to promote these great causes. It is in these things that a nation finds its real prosperity; and he is the faithful citizen of his native land who throws his influence, in every open way, into these scales; it is he who truly loves and serves his country.—C.

Vers. 13—18.—*Lessons from the labourers.* The interesting particulars we have of the labours of building the temple give us a variety of suggestions.

I. THE VALUE OF A WISE INTERMINGLING. 1. *Of blood.* The principal architect and engineer supplied by King Hiram was a man of mixed blood; his father was a man of Tyre, but his mother was a Jewess (see 1 Kings vii. 14), and he appears to have been a man of unusual ability. The mixture of races is proved to be of a very distinct advantage, and we may be very thankful that the discords and contentions of our early history resulted in the mingling of the virtues of Saxon, Celt, and Roman in the English of our own time. 2. *Of labour.* "I have sent a cunning man . . . to find out every device . . . with thy cunning men" (ver. 14). International exchange and co-operation are of immense value, and will prove to be more and more so as the nations open their doors, and all peoples meet and mingle together (see homily on vers. 2, 3, 7—10).

II. A BENEFICENT APPEAL TO OUR INTELLIGENCE. (Ver. 14.) In the variety of material with which God has supplied us we find a striking instance of his creative kindness. It is conceivable that he might have placed us on a planet which had little elemental variety, and which did not therefore admit of many combinations. But on this earth there is practically no limit to the variety of productions, by the putting forth of our observation, ingenuity, and skill. Herein we have very much more, and very much better, than a provision for our comforts; we have an effective appeal to our intelligence, a constant development of our intellectual powers, an elevation of our manhood. It is a rich and noble home, furnished with everything that meets the needs of our complex nature, in which our heavenly Father has placed us.

III. THE POWER WE POSSESS OVER THE ELEMENTS OF NATURE. (Ver. 16.) At that time and in that country men had learned to hew down the tall trees, to cut and carve them into what size and shape they liked, to carry them across the land, and *to employ the sea as a highway.* "We will bring it to thee in flotes by sea." The sea, with its depth and breadth, with its swelling billows and its fearful storms, may well have been regarded at first as an impassable barrier between land and land, as a decisive limit put upon our progress. But we have made it a common highway on which to travel, by which to transport our treasures, and we can map our route and calculate our time with nearly as much regularity as on the still and solid land. Indeed, we can rule the elements of nature much more readily and constantly than we can govern the forces within our own breast. These too often baffle our skill and defeat our purpose. Our greatest difficulty and truest triumph is in turning to good account the elements of our own human nature.

IV. AN UNCONSCIOUS ANTICIPATION OF GOSPEL BREADTH. (Vers. 17, 18.) Solomon employed "the strangers" to do the triple work, here specified, in the temple-building. Moreover, he had recourse to the King of Tyre and to his "cunning workmen." So that we have Gentiles as well as Jews engaged in this work which we may regard as the work of the Lord. Between that event and the present time there was to come a long period of exclusiveness which manifested itself in most ungracious forms in the days of our Lord. But this co-operation of those without and those within the sacred pale is predictive of the glorious breadth of these later times, when, in Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. There is an absolutely open way to the kingdom of God, and an equally open gate into the broad field of holy usefulness.—C.

Vers. 1—10.—*A great project: the building of a temple.* I. THE PROJECT CONCEIVED. (Ver. 1.) A project: 1. *Not new, but old.* Not taken up by Solomon for the first time, but one his father David had years before meditated, though not permitted to execute it, because he had been "a man of war, and had shed blood" (1 Chron. xxviii. 3). 2. *Not self-devised, but delegated.* Not assumed out of vanity or from purely political motives, but handed down to him in circumstances of great solemnity by his royal sire (1 Chron. xxviii. 1—10). 3. *Not sinful, but approved.* Not "proceeding from the sight of the temple service of the Phœnicians and Philistines and of their ostentatious cultus" (Duncker), but commanded by Jehovah, who indicated his wish that it should be carried forward to completion by David's son (2 Sam. vii. 13). 4. *Not subordinate, but principal.* Not after he had built a palace for himself, "a house for his kingdom," but before, so giving God and religion the chief and foremost place in the thoughts of his mind and the activities of his reign. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. (Matt. vi. 33).

II. THE PROJECT ANNOUNCED. (Ver. 4.) 1. *The person informed.* Huram, Hiram (1 Kings v. 1), Hirom (1 Kings vii. 40)—probably the original (Schrader), *Εἴρωμος* (Josephus, 'Contra Apion,' i. 17), Hirummu (Assyrian), Chirôm (Phœnician). The name, probably equivalent to *Achîrôm*, signifies "Brother or Friend of the highness" (*s.c.* of Baal). Whether this was David's friend (1 Chron. xiv. 1), who had negotiations with him prior to the building of his palace (2 Sam. v. 11), and therefore before the birth of Solomon (2 Sam. xi. 2), is disputed, chiefly on the ground that he must then have reigned considerably over forty years, whereas Menander (Josephus, 'Contra Apion,' i. 18) assigns to Solomon's friend a reign of thirty-four years. But a reign of fifty years was not impossible either then (Uzziah, ch. xxvi. 3; Manasseh, ch. xxxiii. 1) or now (George III., Queen Victoria). The proposal to regard Solomon's friend as the son of David's (Thenius, Bertheau) is exposed to the difficulty that the father of Solomon's friend was Abibaal (Josephus)—a difficulty which may be removed by supposing that Abibaal was a surname of the first Hiram, or that the first Hiram was the father of Abibaal. There is, however, no sufficient ground for challenging the identity of the two Hirams; and upon the whole it is as likely that Menander and Josephus have erred as to the length of Hiram's reign, as it is that the Hebrew writers have confounded father and son. 2. *The communication made.* "I build an house," etc. Ancient kings were wont to erect temples to their tutelar divinities. Urukh of Chaldea founded temples—of the moon at Ur, of the sun at Larsa, of Venus at Erech ('Records,' iii. 9); while the magnificent shrines of Memphis, Thebes (Karnack), and Edfou were constructed by Egyptian Pharaohs "for the houses of the gods whose existence is for endless years" (Brugsch, 'Egypt under the Pharaohs,' i. 322). These may be used to illustrate the nature of Solomon's project.

III. THE PROJECT EXPLAINED. (Vers. 5, 6.) Solomon's temple was to be "great," "exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries" (1 Chron. xxii. 5). A resplendent edifice, designed: 1. *For a lofty purpose.* For the honour of a great God. (1) An absolutely supreme God: "Great is our God above all gods" (Deut. iv. 39; 1 Kings viii. 23). (2) An infinitely exalted God: "The heaven of heavens cannot contain him" (1 Kings viii. 27; Jer. xxiii. 24). (3) A personally accepted God. Solomon called him "the Lord my God" (Exod. xx. 3). Theoretical theism is valueless; theism like David's (Ps. lxiii. 1) alone profitable. (4) A profoundly revered God: "Who is able to build him a house?" "Who am I, that I should build him a house?" God should be feared by all who approach him (Deut. xxviii. 58; Josh. xxiv. 14; 2 Kings xvii. 36; Ps. xxxiii. 8; Matt. x. 28; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Heb. xii. 28). Man never knows his own littleness till he examines himself in the light of God's greatness. (5) A truly national God: "The Lord our God." Solomon conjoined his people with himself. Christ taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father" (Matt. vi. 9). 2. *For a noble use.* Not to contain this immeasurably great and glorious Divinity (ch. vi. 18), seeing that Jehovah dwelleth not in temples made with hands (Isa. lxvi. 1; Acts vii. 47), but inhabiteth eternity (Isa. lvii. 15), and filleth heaven and earth with his presence (Jer. xxiii. 24); but to be a visible centre for his worship, to be dedicated to him for the burning before him of sweet incense, etc. Hitherto the people had sacrificed in local sanctuaries (1 Kings iii. 2), Solomon himself being no exception (ch. i. 3; 1 Kings iii. 4); henceforth the nation's sacrificial worship was to be concentrated in the capital and to circulate round the temple. The different parts of that worship here mentioned are those specified by Moses in connection with the tabernacle. (1) The burning of sweet incense (Exod. xxv. 6), which Aaron was directed to do every morning and evening in the holy place (Exod. xxx. 7); (2) the presentation of the shewbread (Exod. xxv. 30); and (3) the offering day by day continuously of the burnt offering (Exod. xxix. 39). The first symbolized the adorations presented to Jehovah by his worshippers (Rev. v. 13); the second, the spiritual sustenance Jehovah provided for his servants (Ps. cxxxii. 15); the third, the self-consecration expected by Jehovah of all whose sins were covered by sacrificial blood (Rom. xii. 1). The assertion that in the first temple the evening offering was purely cereal (Robertson Smith, 'The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,' p. 421) is without foundation (Thenius, on 2 Kings xvi. 15).

IV. THE PROJECT PREPARED FOR. (Vers. 2, 18.) 1. *The furnishing of workmen.* (Vers. 2, 18.) (1) Their number: 70,000 burden-bearers or labourers, 80,000 timber-hewers or skilled woodmen, 3600 overseers or superintendents, in all 153,600, quite an army of workmen. The discrepancy between 1 Kings v. 16 and this account vanishes by observing that to the 3300 overseers in Kings falls to be added 550 chief officers (1 Kings ix. 23), while the 3600 of Chronicles require to be supplemented by 250 chief officers (ch. viii. 10), thus making both totals equal 3850. A gang of 100,000 men, changed every three months, laboured for ten years in building a causeway along which to convey the stones for Cheops' pyramid; and seven millions more men were needed to build the pyramid itself (Birch, 'Egypt,' p. 35; Budge, 'The Dwellers on the Nile,' p. 58). (2) Their orders—labourers, wood-cutters, overseers, chief officers. So society on a larger scale is organized. The principle of division of labour is of endless application.

"So work the honey bees;
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The act of order to a peopled kingdom."
('King Henry V.,' act i. sc. 2.)

(3) Their station: "strangers in the land" (ver. 17); *i.e.* descendants of the unexterminated Canaanites (ch. viii. 7, 8; 1 Kings ix. 20—22). These had David also appointed to be stone-cutters (1 Chron. xxii. 2). 2. *The securing of materials.* In addition to the stores gathered and given by his lately deceased father—gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, precious stones (1 Chron. xxix. 2—5)—Solomon required cedar, fir, and algum trees out of Lebanon. Found nowhere in Palestine except Lebanon, the cedar was a rapidly growing, high-reaching, widespreading, and long-living tree, whose beautiful white wood was much prized for architectural purposes (ch. iii. 5; 1 Kings vi. 15: Jer. xxii. 14). The fir, often mentioned in connection with the cedar (Isa. xiv. 8; xxxvii. 24), was a "choice" and "goodly" tree, whose wood was used for building ships (Ezek. vii. 5) and making musical instruments (2 Sam. vi. 5), and was now to be employed for flooring, ceiling, and doors in the temple (1 Kings vi. 15, 34). The algum, probably the red sandalwood, fetched along with gold and precious stones from Ophir (ch. ix. 10, 11; 1 Kings x. 11) by Solomon's and Hiram's fleets, and here inaccurately said to have grown in Lebanon, was used by Solomon for making pillars for the temple and the palace, as well as harps and psalteries for singers. These different sorts of timber accordingly Solomon sent for from Hiram, his father's friend and his own (ver. 3). 3. *The obtaining of a skilled artificer.* This also he courteously solicited from Hiram, whose subjects were the "artists" of the day (see homily on 'The two Hirams'). Both requests were accompanied with a promise of generous support to the workmen and the artist (ver. 10), and both were frankly honoured.

Learn: 1. The highest glory of a king (or private person) is to seek the glory of God (John viii. 50). 2. Great undertakings, especially in religion and the Church, should be gone about with deliberation, and only after due preparation (Luke xiv. 28). 3. The meanest service in connection with God's house is honourable (Ps. lxxxiv. 10). 4. The value of friendship (Prov. xxvii. 10). 5. Humble thoughts of self the best preparation for acceptable service of God (2 Cor. iii. 5). 6. The talents of unbelievers may be legitimately employed in the service of the Church, seeing that "gifts" are from God, no less than "graces" (Job xxxii. 8). 7. The Church should honourably requite those who aid in her undertakings, since "the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke x. 7; 1 Tim. v. 18).—W.

Ver. 9.—"*A wonderful great house.*" I. ITS BUILDER. The temple of Solomon was constructed by Solomon the son of David; the temple of the Christian Church by Jesus, David's Son, but also David's Lord, the Only-Begotten of the Father, whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. xlv. 13; Heb. iii. 3).

II. ITS MATERIALS. The temple of Solomon was fashioned out of gold, silver, precious stones, etc.; the temple of the Christian Church out of lively stones, or believing and regenerated souls (1 Pet. ii. 5).

III. ITS SITE. The temple of Solomon stood on Mount Moriah, where Jehovah had appeared to Abraham and afterwards to David, its walls reaching down to and rising up from the solid rock; the temple of the Christian Church rests upon the immovable rock of Christ's Person (Matt. xvi. 18; Eph. ii. 20), in whom the clearest and fullest revelation of the Father has been made to men (John i. 18; xiv. 9).

IV. ITS CONSTRUCTION. The temple of Solomon had two apartments—a holy place and a holy of holies, the former for the worshipping priests, the latter for the worshipped God; the Church of Jesus Christ has only one chamber, the separating veil being done away, in fact rent in twain, by the sacrifice of the cross (Matt. xxvii. 51; Heb. x. 20).

V. ITS ADORNMENTS. The temple of Solomon was radiant with gold and silver and decorations of carved work; the Church of Jesus Christ is rendered beautiful by the inward graces of the Spirit (Ps. cxlix. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 3).

VI. ITS PROPORTIONS. The temple of Solomon was, after all, but a small structure; the temple of the Christian Church is a spacious house of many mansions (John xiv. 1).

VII. ITS USES. The temple of Solomon was designed as a habitation for Jehovah's symbolic presence; the Church of Jesus Christ is a habitation for Jehovah himself through the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22).

Learn: 1. The glory of the Christian Church. 2. The superiority of the gospel dispensation. 3. The nobler privilege of New Testament believers.—W.

Vers. 11—15.—*The two Hirams.* I. HIRAM THE KING. 1. *His kingdom.* Phœnicia. Variously explained as "the land of palms," "the land of purple-dyeing," "the land of the brown-red," with reference to the colour of the skin of its inhabitants, Phœnicia in Solomon's time was bounded on the west by the Mediterranean, on the east by Lebanon, on the south by the kingdom of Israel, while towards the north the limit was uncertain, though usually fixed about Arvad, thus making in all a territory a hundred and twenty miles long and twenty miles broad. "It is a liberal estimate for the area to reckon it at four thousand square miles, which is less than that of at least one English county" (Rawlinson, 'Phœnicia: Story of the Nations,' p. 2). Well watered by streams from Lebanon, the country was extremely fertile. In addition to cedars on the heights of Lebanon, fruit trees and vines clothed its slopes, whilst the valleys yielded an abundance of palms, fat pasture, garden produce, and corn. Silicious earth for making glass was found upon the coast, which also furnished the purple shells necessary for dyeing. Iron and probably copper were obtained at Sarepta and elsewhere (Riehm, 'Handwörterbuch,' art. "Phœnicien"). 2. *His capital.* Tyre—in Hebrew *Sôr*, in Assyrian *Surru*, in Old Latin *Sarra*. The city is supposed to have been so called because of its having been built—at least the insular part of it—upon a rock. Most likely younger than Sidon, it was yet a city "whose antiquity was of ancient days" (Jer. xxiii. 7). Founded two hundred and forty years before the building of Solomon's temple (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 3. 1), it was greatly celebrated for its natural and artificial splendour (Ezek. xxvii. 3). Planted in a pleasant place (Hos. ix. 13), it was afterwards compared to "a virgin bathing in the sea, a Tartessus ship swimming upon the ocean, an island on shore, and a city in the sea" (Kitto's 'Cyclopædia,' art. "Tyre"). 3. *His subjects.* The men of Tyre. Renowned as wood-cutters and artists, "skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson," they were likewise merchants who traded with all parts of the then known world (Ezek. xxvii. 1—36). As to physical characteristics, on the whole "the Phœnicians probably, both in form and feature, very much resembled the Jews who were their near neighbours, and who occasionally intermarried with them (1 Kings xi. 1; xvi. 31; ch. ii. 14)," while as to moral characteristics, they shared those of the Western Semites generally—"first, pliability combined with iron fixedness of purpose; secondly, depth and force; thirdly, a yearning for dreamy ease, together with a capacity for the hardest work; fourthly, a love of abstract thought; and fifthly, religiousness, together with an intensely spiritual conception of the Deity" (Rawlinson, 'Phœnicia,' p. 25). 4. *His history.* A son of Abibaal, the first King of Tyre, and a contemporary as well as friend of both David and Solomon (see preceding homily), he was clearly a man of culture. He could write, and in that accomplishment many later kings, even in Christian times and in our own land, have been deficient. Withred, King of Kent, A.D. 700, thus concluded a charter to secure the liberties of the Church: "All the above dictated by myself I have confirmed, and, because I cannot write, I have with mine own hand expressed this by putting the sign of the holy cross +" (Adam Clarke). Writing, however, had been introduced into Phœnicia from Egypt long before the days of Hiram (Rawlinson, 'Phœnicia,' p. 328). Whether copies of the epistolary correspondence of Hiram and Solomon were preserved in "the public records of Tyre" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 2. 8) may be doubtful, but no ground exists for challenging the accuracy of the biblical account that both Solomon and Hiram could write. 5. *His character.* Originally a worshipper of Baal, and a restorer of the temple of the sun-god, he appears to have become an enlightened and sincere follower of Jehovah, whom he recognizes as not merely the national Divinity of Israel, but also as the Maker of heaven and earth (ver. 12). That he was courteous and kind, his intercourse both with David and Solomon attests. That he was a shrewd man of business, who could look well after his own interest, shines out by no means dimly in the hint given to Solomon to forward "the wheat and the barley, the oil and the wine, which my lord had spoken of," when he would see to the felling of the timber (vers. 15, 16).

II. HIRAM THE ARTIST. 1. *His parentage.* The son of a Tyrian brass-worker, and of a Danite widow belonging to the tribe of Naphtali (ver. 14; 1 Kings vii. 14), he was probably on this account selected by the aged sovereign as one likely to be acceptable to the Hebrew monarch and his people. The discrepancy as to the tribe from which Hiram's mother proceeded may be removed by supposing that she was originally a Danite maiden, whose first husband belonged to the tribe of Naphtali, and whose second was a Tyrian. 2. *His profession.* A sort of universal genius, who had skill and understanding to find out every device put before him—like the artist Harmon, of whom Homer ('Iliad,' v. 59, 60) says that he "knew how to form with his hands all ingenious things." "As Theodore of Samos was an architect, a caster of works in bronze, an engraver of signets, and a maker of minute works in the precious metals, as Michael Angelo Buonarotti was at once a painter, a sculptor, an architect, and a worker in bronze" (Rawlinson, 'Phœnicia,' p. 97), so Hiram of Tyre, like Bezaleel (Exod. xxxi. 4), was goldsmith, silversmith, brazier, iron-worker, stone-carver, wood-engraver, linen-weaver, all in one. 3. *His renown.* On account of professional eminence the king had dignified him with the title *Abi*, "my father," which meant "master," in the sense that he was both master of his work and master of works for the king, as afterwards he is styled Solomon's father (ch. iv. 16), because he manufactured for Solomon the vessels for the house of the Lord. Compare Joseph's calling himself "a father," *i.e.* a master or manager, "to Pharaoh" (Gen. xlv. 8).

Learn: 1. The highest office of a king—to promote the material, intellectual, and religious prosperity of his people. 2. The proper duty of friendship—to rejoice in the welfare, co-operate in the undertakings, and reciprocate the courtesies of others. 3. The noblest service of art—to consecrate its genius to the glory of God and the advancement of true religion.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1.—Mount Moriah. This name מוֹרִיָּה occurs twice in the Old Testament, viz. here and Gen. xxii. 2, in which latter reference it is alluded to as "the *land* of Moriah," and "one of the mountains" in it is spoken of. Whether the name designates the same place in each instance is more than doubtful. In the present passage the connection of the place with David is marked. Had it been the spot connected with Abraham and the proposed sacrifice of Isaac, it is at least probable that this also would have been emphasized, and not here only, but in 2 Sam. xxiv. 17—25 and 1 Chron. xxi. 16—26; but in neither of these places is there the remotest suggestion of such fame of old belonging to it. Nor in later passages of history (*e.g.* Nehemiah's rebuilding, and in the prophets, and the New Testament), where the opportunities would have been of the most tempting, is there found one single suggestion of the kind. There are also at fewest two reasons of a positive and intrinsic character against Solomon's Moriah being Abraham's—in that this latter was a specially conspicuous height (Gen. xxii. 4), and was a secluded and comparatively desolate place, neither of which features attach to Solomon's Moriah. Nevertheless the identity theory is stoutly maintained by names as good as those of Thomson ('Land and the Book,' p. 475); Tristram ('Land of Israel,' p. 152); Hengstenberg ('Genuineness of Pentateuch,' ii. 162, Ryland's tr.); Kurtz ('History of O. C.,' i. 271); and Knobel and Kalisch under the passage in Genesis—against Grove (in Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary'); Stanley ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 251; 'Jewish Church,' i. 49); De Wette, Bleek, and Tischendorf [see 'Speaker's Commentary,' under Gen. xxii. 2]. Though there is some uncertainty as to the more exact form of the derivation of the name Moriah, it seems most probable that the meaning of it may be "the sight of Jehovah." **Where the Lord appeared unto David his father.** The clause is no doubt elliptical, and probably it is not to be mended by the inserting of the words, "the Lord," as in our Authorized Version. We do not read anywhere that the Lord did then and there appear to David, though we do read that "the angel of the Lord" appeared to him (2 Sam. xxiv. 16, *passim*; 1 Chron. xxi. 15, 19, *passim*). Nor is it desirable to force the niph. preterite of the verb here, rightly rendered "appeared" or "was seen," into "was shown." We should prefer to solve the difficulty occasioned by the somewhat unfinished shape of the clause (or clauses) by reading it in close relation to 1 Chron. xxii. 1. Then the vivid impressions that had been made both by works and words of the angel of the Lord caused David to feel and to say with emphasis, "This is the (destined) house of the Lord God," etc. In this light our present passage would read, in a parenthetic manner, "which (*i.e.* the house, its Moriah position and all) was seen of David;" or with somewhat more of ease, "*as* was seen of David;" and the following "in the place," etc., will read in a breath with the preceding "began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem . . . in the place," etc. **David had prepared** (so 1 Chron. xxii. 2—4). **In the threshing-floor of Ornan** (so 2 Sam. xxiv. 18; 1 Chron. xxi. 15, 16, 18, 21—28).

Ver. 2.—In the second day. The word "day" as italicized in our Authorized Version type is of course not found in the Hebrew text. Several manuscripts fail also to show the other words of this clause, viz. "In the second;" and that they are probably spurious derives confirmation from the fact that neither the Arabic nor Syriac Versions, nor the Septuagint nor Vulgate translations, produce them. **In the second month, in the fourth year.** Reading the verse, therefore, as though it began thus, the most interesting but doubtful question of fixing an exact chronology for what preceded Solomon's reign is opened. In our present text there is little sign of anything to satisfy the question; but the parallel, 1 Kings vi. 1, offers to do so, if only again to disappoint the more grievously. There we read of "four hundred and eighty years" from the Exodus to this beginning of the building of Solomon's temple. Now, this latter date can be determined with tolerable accuracy (viz. as some twenty years before B.C. 1000) by travelling backwards from the date (B.C. 536) of Cyrus taking Babylon, and the beginning of the return from the Captivity (B.C. 535), making allowance for the seventy years of the Captivity, the duration of the line of separate Judah-kings, and the *remanet*, a large one, of the years of Solomon's reign. All this, however, helps nothing at all the period stretching from the Exodus to the beginning of the building of the temple. And the events of this period, strongly corroborated by other testimony (see Canon Rawlinson, 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. ii. pp. 575, 576), seem to show convincingly that no faith can be reposed in the authenticity of the chronological statement of our parallel.

Ver. 3.—Now these. Perhaps the easiest predicate to supply to this elliptical clause is *are the measures*, or *the cubits*. **Was instructed.** The verb is hoph. conjugation of יֻסַד to "found;" and the purport of the clause is that Solomon *caused the foundations* of the building *to be laid* of such dimensions by cubit. Ezra iii. 11 and Isa. xxviii. 16 give the only other occurrences of the hoph. conjugation of this verb. **Cubits after the first measure.** This possibly means the cubit of pre-Captivity times, but at all events the Israelites' own ancient cubit—perhaps a hand-breadth (Ezek. xliii. 13) longer than the present, or seven in place of six. The cubit (divided into six palms, and a palm into four finger-breadths) was the unit of Hebrew lineal measure. It stands for the length from the elbow to the wrist, the knuckle, or the tip of the longest finger. There is still considerable variation in opinion as to the number of inches that the cubit represents, and considerable perplexity as to the two or three different cubits (Deut. iii. 11; Ezek. xl. 5; xliii. 13) mentioned in Scripture. One of the latest authorities, Conder ('Handbook to the Bible,' 2nd edit., pp. 56—59, 371, 386), gives what seem to be reasons of almost decisive character for regarding the cubit of the temple buildings as one of sixteen inches. The subject is also discussed at length in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1736—1739. And the writer finally concludes to accept, under protest, Thenius's calculations, which give the cubit as rather over nineteen inches.

Ver. 4.—The porch . . . an hundred and twenty. The "porch" (אוּלָם, Greek, ὁ πρόναος). It is out of the question that the porch should be of this height in itself. And almost as much out of the question that, if it could be so, this should be the only place to mention it by word or description. There can be no doubt that the text is here slightly corrupt, and perhaps it is a further indication of this that, while the parallel contains *nothing* of the height, *this* place fails (but comp. our ver. 8) to give the breadth ("ten cubits"), which the parallel does give. The words for "hundred" and for "cubit" easily confuse with one another. And our present Hebrew text, מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים, read אַמּוֹת עֶשְׂרִים, will make good Hebrew syntax, and be in harmony with the Septuagint (Alexandrian), and with the Syriac and Arabic Versions. This gives the height of the porch as 20 cubits, which will be in harmony with the general height of the building, which was 30 cubits. Thus far, then, the plan of the temple is plain. The house is 60 cubits long, *i.e.* 20 for the holy of holies (דְּבִיר or קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים); 40 for the holy place (הֵיכָל); and for breadth 20 cubits. The porch was in *length* the same as the breadth of the *house*, viz. 20 cubits, but in *breadth* it was 10 cubits (1 Kings vi. 3) only, while its height was 20 cubits, against a height of 30 cubits for the "house" (1 Kings vi. 2). Overlaid it within with pure gold; *i.e.* covered the planks with gold leaf, or sometimes with plates of gold (Ovid., 'I. Epp. ex. Pont.' i. 37, 38, 41, 42; Herod., i. 98; Polyb., x. 27. § 10). The appreciation, as well as bare knowledge, of gold belonged to a very early date (Gen. ii. 12). The days when it was used in ring or lump (though not in coin) for sign of wealth and for purposes of exchange, and also for ornament (Gen. xiii. 2; xxiv. 22; xlii. 21), indicate how early were the beginnings of metallurgy as regards it, though much more developed afterwards (Judg. xvii. 4; Prov. xvii. 3; Isa. xl. 19; xlvi. 9); and shew it in the time of David and Solomon no rare art, even though foreign workmen, for obvious reasons, were the most skilful workers with it. There are four verbs used to express the idea of overlaying, viz. (*a*) חָפָה, in hiph. This occurs only in this chapter, vers. 5, 7, 8, 9; but in niph. Ps. lxviii. 13 may be compared. (*b*) עָלָה in hiph. This occurs in the present sense, though not necessarily staying very closely by it; in ch. ix. 15, 16, and its parallel (1 Kings x. 16, 17); and perhaps in 2 Sam. i. 24. The meaning of the word, however, is evidently so generic that it scarcely postulates the rendering "overlay." (*c*) צָפָה in piel. This occurs in our present verse, as also in a multitude of other places in Chronicles, Kings, Samuel, and Exodus. The radical idea of the verb (kal) is "to be bright." (*d*) רָדַך in hiph. This occurs only once (1 Kings vi. 32). No one of these verbs in itself bespeaks certainly of which or what kind the overlaying might be, unless it be the last, the analogy of which certainly points to the sense of a thin *spreading*.

Ver. 5.—The greater house; *i.e.* the holy place. He ceiled. This rendering is wrong. The verb is (*a*), given above (ver. 4). It is repeated in the next clause of this very verse as "overlaid," as also in vers. 7, 8, 9. The generic word "covered" would serve all the occasions on which the word occurs here. From a comparison of the parallel it becomes plain that the meaning is that the stone structure of floor and walls was covered over with wood (1 Kings vi. 7, 15, 18). That wood for the floor was *fir* (1 Kings vi. 15), probably also for the *walls*, which must depend partly on the translation of this ver. 15. It would *seem* to say that (beside the stone) there was an inner stratum, both to walls and floor, of *cedar* (reason for which would be easy of conjecture). But another translation obviates the necessity of this inner stratum supposition, rendering "*from* the floor to the top of the wall." According to this, while the overlaying gold was on cedar for walls and ceiling (1 Kings vi. 9), it was on fir for the floor, which does *not seem what our* present verse purports, unless, according to the suggestion of some, "fir" be interpreted to include cedar. Set thereon palm trees and chains. These were, of course, *carvings*. The *chains*, not mentioned in the parallel (1 Kings vi. 29; but see vii. 17), were probably wreaths of chain design or pattern. Easier modern English would read "put thereon."

Ver. 6.—He garnished. The verb employed is (*c*) of ver. 4, *supra* (Rev. xxi. 19). Precious stones. The exact manner in which these were applied or fixed is not stated. What the precious stones were, however, need not be doubtful (1 Chron. xxix. 2; the obvious references for which passage, Isa. liv. 11, 12 and Rev. xxi. 18—21, cannot be forgotten. See also Ezek. xxvii. 16; Cant. v. 14; Lam. iv. 7). For beauty; *i.e.* to add beauty to the house. Parvaim. What this word designates, or, if a place, where the place was, is not known. Gesenius ('Lexicon,' *sub voc.*) would derive it from a Sanskrit word, *pûrva*, meaning "oriental." Hitzig suggests another Sanskrit word, *para*, meaning "hill," and indicating the "twin hills" of Arabia (Ptol., vi. 7. § 11) as the derivation. And Knobel suggests that it is a form of *Sepharvaim*, the Syriac and Jonathan Targum version of *Sephar* (Gen. x. 30). The word does not occur in any other Bible passage (see Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' vol. ii. p. 711).

Ver. 7.—And graved cherubim. In the parallel this statement is placed in company with that respecting the "palms and flowers." Layard tells us that all the present description of decoration bears strong resemblance to the Assyrian. There can be no difficulty in imagining this, both in other respects, and in connection with the fact that foreigners, headed by the chief designer Hiram, had so large a share in planning the details of temple workmanship.

Ver. 8.—The most holy house. The writer proceeds from speaking of "the greater house" (ver. 5), or holy place, to the "holy of holies." The parallel (1 Kings vi. 20) adds the height, as also 20 cubits. Six hundred talents. It is impossible to assert with any accuracy the money value intended here Six hundred talents of gold is an amazing proportion of the yearly revenue of 666 talents of gold, spoken of in 1 Kings x. 14. This latter amount is worth, in Keil's estimate, about three million and three quarters of our money, but in Poole's estimate nearer double that! The Hebrew, Phœnician, and Assyrian unit of weight is the same, and one quite different from the Egyptian. The *silver* talent (Hebrew, *ciccar*, כִּכָּר) contained 60 manehs, each maneh being equal to 50 shekels, and a shekel being worth 220 grains; *i.e.* there were 3000 shekels, or 660,000 grains, in such talent. But the *gold* talent contained 100 manehs, the maneh 100 shekels, and the shekel 132 grains, making this gold talent the equivalent of 10,000 shekels, or 1,320,000 grains. The "holy shekel," or "shekel of the sanctuary," could be either of gold or silver (Exod. xxxviii. 4, 5). (For some treatment of this still unsatisfactory subject, see Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1727—1736; and Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' 2nd edit., pp. 64—78, 81.)

Ver. 9.—The weight of the nails, fifty shekels of gold. According to the above scale, therefore, this weight would be a twelve-thousandth part for the nails of all the weight of the overlaying plates of gold. **The upper chambers.** This is the first mention of these "chambers" in the present description, but they have been alluded to by the Chronicle writer before, in 1 Chron. xxviii. 11. What or where they were is as yet not certainly ascertained. Presumably they were the highest tier of those chambers which surrounded three sides of the main building. But some think they were a superstructure to the holy of holies; others, high chambers in the supposed very lofty superstructure of the porch. Both of these suppositions seem to us of the unlikeliest. It would, however, be much more satisfactory, considering that all the subject before and after treats of the most holy place, to be able to connect this expression in some way with *it*, nor is there any reason evident for overlaying richly with gold the aforesaid chambers (ch. ix. 4 compared with xxii. 11) of the third tier.

Ver. 10.—Image work. The word in the Hebrew text (צַעֲצֻעִים) translated thus in our Authorized Version is a word unknown. Gesenius traces it to "an unused" Hebrew root צוּעַ, of Arabic derivation (meaning "to carry on the trade of a goldsmith"), and offers to translate it "statuary" work with the Vulgate (*opus statuarium*). The parallel (1 Kings vi. 23) gives simply "wood of oil" (not "olive," Neh. viii. 15), *i.e.* the oleaster tree wood. It is obvious that some of the characters of these words would go some way to make the other unknown word. But it must be confessed that our text shows no external indications of a corrupt reading.

Ver. 11.—Twenty cubits. This, like all the preceding cubit measurings of the temple foundations and heights, and with all the succeeding cherubim measurings, is the exact double of that observed by Moses (Exod. xxxvii. 6—9). The *height* of the cherubim, *ten* cubits, not mentioned in our text, is given in the parallel (1 Kings vi. 26).

Ver. 13.—Their faces were inward; Hebrew, "were *to the house*," viz. to the holy place. The position of these cherubim, both as to wings and faces, was clearly different from that of those for the tabernacle of Moses. There they "cover the mercy-seat with their wings, and their faces are one to another . . . toward the mercy-seat were the faces of the cherubim" (Exod. xxv. 20; xxxvii. 9). May this alteration in the time of Solomon indicate possibly one more advance in the developing outlook of Divine mercy to a whole world? Neither this place nor the parallel makes it certain whether the cherubim, that are here said to stand on their feet, stood on the *ground*, as some say they did. As regards those of the tabernacle, the prepositions used in Exod. xxv. 18, 19 and xxxvii. 7, 8 appear to lay stress on their position being a fixture at and on each extremity of the mercy-seat.

Ver. 14.—The veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen (so Exod. xxvi. 31, 33, 35; xxxvi. 35; xl. 3, 21). It is remarkable that our parallel (1 Kings vi.) does not make mention of the veil, though a feature of which so much was always made (Matt. xxvii. 51; Mark xv. 38; Luke xxiii. 45; Heb. vi. 19; ix. 3). On the other hand, it is remarkable that our present passage does not make mention of the folding "doors of olive tree," which, with "the veil," intercepted the approach to the oracle (1 Kings vi. 31, 32), nor of the partition walls (1 Kings vi. 16) in which they were situate, nor of the "partition chains [1 Kings vi. 21] of gold before the oracle."

Ver. 15.—Thirty and five cubits. The height of these pillars is attested in three places to have been 18 cubits (1 Kings vii. 15; 2 Kings xxv. 17; Jer. lii. 21). Some therefore think that the height given in our text describes rather the distance of the one pillar from the other, which would be just 35 cubits, if they stood at the extreme points of the line of the porch front; since the wings on each side (5 cubits for the lowest chamber, and 2½ cubits for the thickness of the walls) would make up this amount. It is further noticed with this explanation that their height (18 cubits) with the chapiters (5 cubits) added, would bring them to the same height as the porch, and that their ornamentation agrees with that of the porch (1 Kings vii. 19). All this may be the case. Yet considering other indications of uncertainty about our text and the fact that the characters *yod kheth* (18) are easily superseded by *lamed he* (35), it is perhaps likelier that we have here simply a clerical error. The parallel place tells us that these pillars and the chapiters were cast of brass; that "a line [1 Kings vii. 15; Jer. lii. 41] of twelve cubits [not seven] did compass either of them about;" that the ornamentation of each chapiter was "a net of checker-work, and a wreath of chain-work;" that upon the five cubits of chapiter there was another "four cubits of lily-work," etc. If this last feature apply to the two pillars, and not (as some think) to the porch only, the pillars would reach a height of 27 cubits, and if it be supposed that they stood on some stone or other superstructure, it may still be that our "thirty-five cubits" has its meaning. Meantime the passage in Jeremiah (lii. 41) tells us that the pillars were hollow, and that the thickness of the metal was "four fingers."

Ver. 16.—**Chains, as in the oracle.** Though the writer of Chronicles has not in this description mentioned any chains as appertaining to the oracle, yet they are mentioned in the parallel. The selection of what is said has in our present text so much the appearance of haste, that this may account for the abrupt appearance of the allusion here. Otherwise the words, "in the oracle," tempt us to fear some corruptness of text, scarcely safely removed by Bertheau's suggestion to substitute רָבִיד ("ring") for דְּבִיר ("oracle"). **An hundred pomegranates** (comp. ch. iv. 13; 1 Kings vii. 15, 18, 20). These passages indicate that the total number of pomegranates was two hundred for *each* pillar.

Ver. 17.—**Jachin . . . Boaz.** The margin of our Authorized Version gives with sufficient correctness the meaning of these names of the pillars, which purport to set forth the safety and sure strength that belong to those who wait on, and who calmly and constantly abide by, the Divine leading. The latter, however, is one word, a substantive, not a compound of preposition, pronoun, and substantive; and the former, though by derivation the future of the hiph. conjugation of the verb כון, is established as a substantive in its own right.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1—ch. iv. 22 (see also on ch. iv. in its proper place).—These two chapters are occupied with the subject of *the preparation for the building of the temple;* its site, its exact proportions and measures, its contents and furniture, vessels and instruments. Upon the first glance, and merely superficial reading of these, it may seem that they bear little relation to us, address no special messages to us, and proffer but little instruction adapted to our light, our time of day, our confessedly more spiritual form of religion. A little longer thought, more patient inquiry, and deeper consideration will go far to correct, or, at any rate, to modify, an estimate of this kind. Perhaps no devout mind, in a healthy state, unsophisticated and unvitiated by special freak of education, will fail to feel, free of argument, that the principles underlying the directions of minutest detail of outward work once, find their use and application now within the domain of *motive, of purity of motive,* and *exactitude* in judging, not the motives of others, but our own; within the domain, again, of cheerful, *ungrudging giving* to Christ and to his living Church; and within the domain of that *exalted but perfectly simple* law of giving, not the lame, the blind, the blemished, and the utter superfluity of our own possessions, but the first and the best, and of what may call for some self-denial, some self-sacrifice. Add to these considerations the hard fact that, in the name of Christianity, in the purer name of Christ himself, and for the love of him, now for fifteen centuries (repudiating that narrowest of all things, a narrow construction of the spirituality of the simplest and purest religion possible) the instinct of the disciples and followers of Christ has expended on the art of ecclesiastical architecture, the art of ecclesiastical painting, the art of ecclesiastical music—*all* things of the *outside,* if so they must be called—an amount of care, time, skill, devotion, exactness, and wealth of precious things, exceeding by millionfolds all devoted to the temple of Solomon and all its successors, and required for them, even by highest inspiration of the pattern showed on the mount. It is, therefore, a great historic mistake, and a blinded or oblivious reading of history, when any presume to suppose that the detail, exactness, material grandeur, and contribution of all costly things commanded for the temple of the ancient Jew are not paralleled by their almost identical likes in the Church of the Christian! For such reasons as these it is interesting, and it is useful, *to review* the injunctions and the methods and the accomplished results of Solomon's work as rehearsed in these chapters. They contain the seminal principles which Christian work still demands, and by which the Christian Church should be guided. Far, then, from slighting and underrating the significance of the sacred principles that underlay the religion of elder days, and of that chosen people, to whom it was conveyed in all its outer detail by special revelation, let us be encouraged to consider it attentively, *now*, in respect of that holy house, the temple, which stood for so much in the minds of a great and remarkable nation, and which was a manifestation of so much of the mind and will of God to them first, and through them and after them to the world. For we are here reminded of—

I. THE STRESS LAID UPON THE VERY PLACE WHERE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TEMPLE SHOULD BE PLANTED. It was the place: 1. Where sin had been sternly reminded of its just punishment (1 Chron. xxi. 15—17), and had grievously felt it. 2. Where the interposing angel of the Lord appeared, and spoke and stayed the destruction and pestilence (1 Chron. xxi. 27), in answer to confession, repentance, and sacrifice. 3. Where that same sacrifice was offered on the new-builded altar, which was paid for, and everything necessary to the sacrifice upon it paid for by David, that it might as far as possible be the perfect offering of self. The house and the altar were almost synonymous (1 Chron. xxii. 1). And we are reminded of the greatest fact, the central fact, that there is no such thing as a true Church without altar. The one, only true and ever-abiding Church of the living God on earth is the sacred environment of *the* solemn altar, is founded one with it, built up round about it, grows out of it, commences, as did the temple of David (1 Chron. xxii. 2) and Solomon, from it, and ever *must* have it for its centre.

II. THE FACT OF THE DIVINE INSTRUCTION GIVEN FOR THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE IN ALL ITS PARTS. This fact, *per se*, may be justly regarded as marking: 1. The Divine estimate as to human need of *revelation for all* that pertains to real religion. There is something that inevitably and invariably differences natural religion from revealed religion. It lacks direction, stability, and a real living connection between the worshipped and the worshipper, the great Adorable and the humble sinful adorer. This is supplied by revelation, which is by most deliberate preference not partial, not fitful, not a thing to be taken or left, but uniform, spreading everywhere and penetrating to each detail. 2. The reverence towards all that affects our spiritual and eternal weal, which Heaven would help us to feel and earnestly to believe in. 3. The kind sympathetic interest with which the August Majesty himself would wish to help us assure ourselves that he tends even *the human side* of religious institutions. He "dwells in light unapproachable," and yet himself is not inaccessible, is not afar off, is nigh to us. What a welcome thought, inspiring thought, that he helps us build our very place of worship! Notice—

III. THE CAREFULNESS AND EXACTITUDE WHICH THAT DIVINE INSTRUCTION MODELLED FOR OUR IMITATION. After the tabernacle, in time indeed, but second to it in no other sense, nor strictly separable from it, here was the beginning of corporate Church life and institution and building. All things must be done "decently and in order;" "as to the Lord, and not to men," alone; "not with eye-service." And as real religion is the only real life, how sure were all the carefulness and exactitude now prescribed and exemplified to draw up, and constantly to tend to draw up, lesser life, home life, and individual life! The individual life (time and illustrations without number have shown it) will grow more divinely ordered for that man whose taste, whose knowledge, but, above all, whose deep principle reverences, observes, and "observes to do" all the words of such commandments, with those that correspond with them, and are their heirs and successors, as are contained in these chapters.

IV. THE PRINCIPLE INVOLVED IN THE MATERIALS AND CONTENTS OF THE TEMPLE, IN THEIR BEING SUFFICIENT IN ALL SMALLEST DETAILS, BEAUTIFUL IN DESIGN AND MAKE, GENUINE AND SOLID, AND COSTLY.

V. THE THINGS IN OR BEFORE THE TEMPLE, WHICH WERE GREATER THAN IT. Beside the many lesser vessels and instruments, each of which had its ancillary (and therefore not unimportant) relation to the greater vessels, or to the worship, service, and sacrifices for which those greater were ordained, there were some of special, marked, leading importance; while the distinguishing importance of some others lay strictly in *their import*. Call attention to just the things which are said of: 1. *The greater house*.

its gold; its ceiling, with fine gold, palm-tree figures and chains; its walls, with graven cherubim. 2. *The most holy house*; its fine gold; its two symbolic cherubim; its veil, with wrought cherubim. 3. *The two pillars*; their height; their chapiters, with chains and pomegranates; their names and respective positions.

[The general homiletics of ch. iii. and iv. combined close here, and the more particular homiletics appropriate to ch. iv. separately, follow that chapter.]

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Beginning to build.* "Solomon began to build the house of the Lord." We are frequently in a similar position; we are starting some sacred enterprise, which, directly or indirectly, affects the Church of Christ, the kingdom of God. What are the sentiments and what is the spirit appropriate to such an occasion? But we may first learn from the text—

I. THAT, TO A LARGE EXTENT, OUR POSSESSION IS OUR HERITAGE. It was a very great privilege Solomon was now enjoying, and it must have been felt by him to be a high honour and a keen gratification. How much of it he owed to his father! It was David who conceived the idea; it was he who gained the sanction of Jehovah; it was he who had practically gained the valuable co-operation of Hiram (1 Kings v. 1); it was he, also, who had secured an admirable and acceptable site for the building (1 Chron. xxi. 18; xxii. 1). If we examine we shall find that a very large part of our acquisition, whether it be property (in the usual sense of that word), or knowledge and intellectual power, or honour, or affection, or even character, is due to that which we have inherited from those who came before us.

II. THAT GREATER WORK DEMANDS FULLER PREPARATION. The building of the temple was certainly one of the very first things that Solomon considered and determined upon when he came to the throne. Yet it was not until "the second month, in the fourth year of his reign," that the erection actually commenced. So great a work took large preparation. We show our sense of the real seriousness and magnitude of the work we do for God when we take time and spend strength in its preparation. To go with haste and heedlessness to any sacred work, even though the "house of the Lord" we are building is not one of magnificence (1 Chron. xxii. 5), is a spiritual misdemeanour; to enter upon any great undertaking in the name and cause of Jesus Christ without much patient thought and earnest effort in the way of preparation is wholly wrong.

III. THAT THE COMMENCEMENT OF A GREAT WORK IS A MEMORABLE MOMENT. It was fitting that the very day when this great work began should be recorded, as it is in Holy Writ (ver. 2). It was a memorable moment in Solomon's reign and in the history of the Jews. For then began to rise a building which had an immense and, indeed, an incalculable influence on the nation, and so upon mankind. Such times are sacred. Of all those days to which, in later years, we look back with interest and joy, none will stand out so clearly, and none will give us such pure and strong gratification, as the days when we instituted some movement in the cause of Christ, in the service of our fellow-men.

IV. THAT THIS HOUR OF COMMENCEMENT SHOULD BE A VERY SACRED TIME TO OUR SOULS. It may well be one of: 1. *Joyful eagerness*; for there is something very inspiring in the act of commencing a truly noble work—it exhilarates and animates the soul. It should also be one of: 2. *Special prayerfulness*; for then we urgently need the guiding and guarding hand of our God to be upon us. 3. *Steadfast purpose*; for there will be unanticipated difficulties and disheartening delays, possibly much temporary disappointment and partial failure, and a strong, resolute purpose will be needed to carry us through to the end. 4. *Unselfish devotedness.* We must ever keep in mind that the "house" we are erecting, of whatever kind it be, is the house "of the Lord." If we fail to realize that it *is for Christ* that we are working, our labour will lose its excellency, its inspiration, and its reward.—C.

Vers. 3—9.—*Four elements of faithful service.* These are—

I. OBEDIENCE; the intelligent carrying out of Divine direction. Close and careful correspondence with the commandment was more particularly enforced under the

Mosaic dispensation (Heb. viii. 5). Solomon was careful to do as he was "instructed for the building" (ver. 3); the dimensions were determined "by the first measure" (ver. 3); he was concerned to act obediently. In the service of Christ, while there is very little indeed of prescription or proscription as to the details of devotion or the particulars of Divine service, we shall be careful to consult the will of Christ in everything. The mind of our Master, and not our own individual preference, should be the main consideration in all Christian effort: we shall gain a knowledge of his mind by a devout and intelligent study of his life and of his words, and of those of his apostles.

II. SPONTANEITY. This is not any wise inconsistent with obedience, and it was not absent even from the building of the temple, in which there was, necessarily, so much of careful and detailed prescription. Solomon "garnished the house with precious stones" (ver. 6), and these had been furnished by the spontaneous liberality of David and of his people (1 Chron. xxix. 2, 8). In the service of our Saviour there is ample room for the play of spontaneous devotion. We may bring to his sacred cause the "precious stones" of our most reverent and earnest thought, of our most fervent feeling, of our most eloquent and convincing speech, of our most self-denying labour, all uncommanded and unconstrained, all prompted by a pure and keen desire to serve our Lord and bless our brethren.

III. BEAUTY. These precious stones were "for beauty" (ver. 6), and the abundance of gold would also add to the beauty of the building, as seen from the inside. Every "house of the Lord" which we build should be fair and comely as well as strong. Happily for us, the beauty in which God delights is not pecuniarily costly; it is that which the poorest may bring to the sanctuary and the service of his Lord. It is not found in precious stones which only the wealthy can secure; it is found in "a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Pet. iii. 3), in the spirit of true reverence and pure devotion (John iv. 23), in patient endurance under wrong (1 Pet. ii. 19, 20), in patient continuance in well-doing (Rom. ii. 7), in a broad and deep Christian charity (1 Cor. xiii.). These are the beauties which adorn our character and make our service well-pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour.

IV. THOROUGHNESS. The strong timber which Solomon used was "overlaid with pure gold"—with the precious metal, and that of the best kind. Nothing was spared that could give strength, solidity, perfectness to the building now erected. It was built, not for a few years, or for a generation, but for long centuries; to stand the force of the elements of nature; to remain strong and fair when children's children in distant times should come up to Zion to see the house of the Lord and to enter into its courts. All work that we do for our Divine Redeemer should partake of this character. It should be thorough; it should be of the very best that we can offer; it should be of "pure gold." Not our weakness, but our strength; not our exhaustion, but our freshness; not our crudeness, but our culture; not our ignorance, but our information and acquisition—our very best self should we bring to our Lord who gave *himself* for us. With the choicest materials we can furnish, in the exercise of our faculties at their fullest, should we build up his sacred cause who lavished his strength and laid down his life on our behalf.—C.

Vers. 10—13.—*Life at its highest.* These cherubim were, of course, symbolic; but what did they symbolize? 1. *Certainly not the Divine.* Nothing is more improbable, indeed nothing is more incredible, than that in the holy place of the temple there should be anything artistic intended to portray or represent the Deity. That would have gone far to unteach the very truth which was so carefully taught by every Mosaic institution. 2. As certainly not *the animal and irrational.* Part of these creatures may have belonged to the unintelligent world; but if it were so, it would only be to represent some virtue or power of which that particular animal was suggestive. 3. Probably *the highest form of creature-life*, human or angelic; either man at his best, when endowed with nobler powers than he possesses here, or else the holy and pure intelligences which belong to that great realm that intervenes between the human and Divine. And the idea is that, as we reach the very noblest forms of life, we find these in the near presence of God and engaged in his study and service. To what shall we do well to aspire? Where shall we dwell when we touch our culminating point? In what activities shall we be then engaged? To these questions the cherubim provide the answer.

I. In the near presence of God. The cherubim were, day and night, in the most holy place, close to the sacred ark, very near to the manifested presence of God. Life, at its very highest, is life that is spent with God; in which the spirit is conscious of his nearness to itself. God was not more truly present at Bethel than elsewhere; but to Jacob that was the very "house of God," because there he felt himself to be in the very presence of the Holy One. And it is just as we realize that, step by step along all our earthly course, moment by moment through all our earthly life, God is truly with us and we are the objects of his thought and his love—it is in that proportion that our life rises to its true stature, and we are not only men, we are sons of God, we are "living ones" whose home is on the earth, but whose citizenship is in heaven.

II. In the sustained study of God. The faces of these cherubim were "inward" (ver. 13). They turned toward the manifested presence; they gazed continually on God. God was the Object of their ceaseless thought, of their fixed and settled study. Just as we truly live, this will be so with us. We shall wish to know ourselves, and shall study our human nature in all its varied manifestations; we shall wish to know all we can learn of the visible universe, and shall delight to search its secret stores, its beauties, and its marvels. But we shall feel that the one object that is, far above all others, worthy of our most earnest and patient study, is the character, the life, the will, the working of our heavenly Father. The noblest and truest study of mankind is God, and our life is life indeed as we are engaged in the reverent and the intelligent study of his mind and spirit. To us who "have the mind of Christ," and know the Father by our knowledge of his Son, this grand privilege is open.

III. In the active service of God. A full description is given of the wings of the cherubim. Why? Is it not to indicate that they stand ready, with their full powers outstretched, to do the bidding of Jehovah? The highest life is in the fullest service. As we serve we live. Even the "living ones" of the celestial kingdom find their nobility, not in commanding, but in fulfilling and in achieving. The attitude of the highest intelligences we can conceive and depict is that of perfect readiness to carry out the commandments, to do the work, to promote the kingdom of God. It will be thus that we too shall attain our highest. Not by *receiving* that which is most costly, not by *enjoying* that which is most pleasant; but by eagerly and faithfully *doing* that which is most worthy and most Divine.—C.

Vers. 15—17.—*Our strength and beauty.* The dimensions of these pillars are still unsettled and uncertain. But there can be no question as to their main characteristics, and very little doubt as to their spiritual significance. Their obvious size and their names speak of *strength;* the decorations which they bore speak of *beauty.* Standing where they stood, in or at the porch of the house of the Lord, they were standing monuments of the two closely related truths—

I. That we should recognize in God himself strength and beauty. 1. *Strength.* Our temptation is to trust in the strong barrier of sea or mountain range; in the powerful army and navy with all their equipments; in the vigorous and sagacious policy of our statesmanship; in the amplitude of pecuniary resources, etc. But the strength of a country, as also of a man, is in God. If his favour is turned away, all our material advantages will fail us. Rabshakeh's multitudes of armed Assyrians disappear at the stroke of the God of Israel; the rich man, with his full barns and his cherished plans, leaves his wealth behind him when God says, "Thy soul is required of thee." But to the faithful Hezekiah the favour of Jehovah proves an ample shield against the threatening enemy. And they are blessed who "walk in the light of God's countenance;" for he is "the glory of their strength: and in his favour shall their horn be exalted" (Ps. lxxxix. 15, 17). The wise nation and the wise man will not look complacently *around* them to find the secret and source of their strength; they will look *up* toward him that dwelleth in the heavens, and say, "Jachin; Boaz;" "*he* will establish;" "in *him* is strength." 2. *Beauty.* We are inclined to boast of the beauty of the landscape; or of the persons of our sons and daughters; or of our palaces and castles and cathedrals; or of our "pleasant pictures," and fair gems and jewels. But our delight should be, first and most, in him whose Divine character is perfect; who unites in himself, with completest symmetry, all possible attributes; who is as merciful as he is pure, who is as pitiful as he is righteous; who is as gentle as he is strong; whom we can not only adore and honour, but delight in and love. We go to the house of the Lord that we may behold "the beauty of the Lord" (Ps. xxvii. 4); and especially that we may dwell upon the beauties and the glories of the character of that Son of man who was "holy, harmless, undefiled," in whose mouth no guile was found, but in whose life every grace that can adorn humanity was seen by those that knew him.

II. THAT WE SHOULD SEEK FROM GOD OUR STRENGTH AND BEAUTY. The Israelites went up to the house of the Lord that by obedient sacrifice, by reverent worship, by believing prayer, they might secure the favour of the Most High. If we would gain from God the strength we need, and that spiritual excellency which is the true beauty of the nation and the individual, we must *go to God to seek it.* We must present ourselves before him from whom all strength and glory come. We must seek him (1) in confession, and in Christ who is our Propitiation; (2) in reverent worship; (3) in earnest and believing prayer for his upholding power and for his shaping hand. Then will he make us *strong* to overcome and to accomplish; *beautiful* to attract and to win.—C.

Vers. 1—17.—*The building of the temple.* I. THE SITE. 1. *Central.* At Jerusalem. (1) Natural. Jerusalem, the metropolis of the kingdom, the political and religious centre of the country, was entitled to contain the chief symbol round which the political and religious life of the nation was in future to revolve. (2) Appropriate. As the king had a palace in the capital, it was fitting the king's King, Jehovah, should there have a temple. (3) Convenient. Since the temple was to be Israel's meeting-place in their national assemblies, it was better the structure should stand in the chief city of the realm than in a provincial town. (4) Significant. It seemed to say that henceforth Solomon was to seek the security of his throne, the stability of his government, and the welfare of his empire in the worship of Jehovah and the practice of religion. 2. *Conspicuous.* On Mount Moriah, which had been so named because of Jehovah's appearing on its summit to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 2), rather than because it had been pointed out to David by Jehovah (Bertheau)—a mountain situated north-east of Zion, and now styled "The Haram," after a Mohammedan mosque with which it is crowned. According to present-day measurements, rising to the height of between 2278 and 2462 feet above the level of the Mediterranean (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 359), it was a fitting site for the temple, which, besides being firmly established as founded on a rock, would thereby be visible from afar, and so a centre of attraction for travellers approaching the city. So is Christ's Church, like it, founded on a rock (Matt. xvi. 18), and, like it, should be a city set upon a hill (Matt. v. 14). 3. *Consecrated.* In the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (On the suitability of the Haram summit to be a threshing-floor, see Exposition.) In addition to the theophany which had there occurred in connection with the offering of Isaac, a similar manifestation of Jehovah had recently taken place in the lifetime of David (1 Chron. xxi. 15—30). It was thus to Solomon a spot doubly hallowed. If in David's eyes, because of the old patriarchal altar that had stood thereon, the place was invested with a special charm, in Solomon's this charm would not be diminished, but intensified, by the recollection of the altar his father had built.

II. THE TIME. 1. *Specific.* "In the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign, began Solomon to build;" *i.e.* 480 years after the exodus from Egypt (1 Kings vi. 1); or, according to another reckoning, 592 years subsequent to that event, 240 after the building of Tyre, and 143 years 8 months prior to the founding of Carthage (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 3. 1; 'Against Apion,' i. 17, 18). Great events make deep indentations on the memories of men as well as on the course of time. The building of the Solomonic temple, of more than national, was of world-wide importance. 2. *Early.* It shews the high conception Solomon had of the work delegated to him by his father, as well as marked out for him by God; indicates the earnestness and enthusiasm with which he undertook it, that he set about its performance almost at the earliest possible moment, "in the fourth year of his reign," before erecting for himself a palace, or for his country a chain of forts. It is an Old Testament form of the New Testament lesson, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

III. THE ERECTION. 1. *The house*, or the temple proper. (1) Its dimensions: 60 cubits long, 20 broad (ver. 3), 30 high (1 Kings vi. 2); *i.e.* taking the cubit at 1·33 feet, 79·8 feet, 26·6 feet, and 39·9 feet, or, in round numbers, 80 feet, 27 feet, and 40 feet. (2) Its parts. "The greater house" (ver. 5), *i.e.* the holy place, or the outer of the two compartments into which the house was divided, and "the most holy house" (ver. 8), or the inner of the two compartments. As this latter was a perfect cube, 20 cubits each way, the former was (internally viewed) a rectangular parallelepiped, of length 40, of breadth 20, of height 30 cubits. Besides these were "the upper chambers" (ver. 9), or the space above the holy of holies, whose dimensions were 20 cubits long, 20 broad, and 10 high. (3) Its ornaments. The house was built of white freestone cut from the royal quarries under Bezetha, the northern hill on which Jerusalem is built (Warren, 'Underground Jerusalem,' p. 60), smoothly polished and laid so skilfully and harmoniously together that "there appeared to the spectators no sign of any hammer or other instrument of architecture, but as if, without any use of them, the entire materials had naturally united themselves together" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 3. 2). The interior of the house was covered with wood, the walls and the ceiling with cedar, the floor with cypress (1 Kings vi. 15), so that no part of the stonework was visible. The wood was ornamented with carved work representing palm trees (ver. 5) and cherubim (ver. 7), the latter on the walls, the former on the roof. In addition were knops or gourds and open flowers (1 Kings vi. 18). Similar decorations were carved upon the outer sides of the walls (1 Kings vi. 29). The whole house, interior and exterior—walls, roof, beams, posts, doors—was overlaid with gold plates, which received impressions from the carved work underneath. "To say all in a word, Solomon left no part of the temple, neither internal nor external, but what was covered with gold" (Josephus). The gold, of the finest quality (1 Kings vi. 20), was fetched from Parvaim, a place of uncertain location—Ophir in Ceylon (Bochart), Ophir in India (Knobel), Peru and Mexico (Ritter), Southern or Eastern Arabia (Bertheau), the peninsula of Malacca (Leyrer, in Herzog), having all been suggested. The veil which divided the compartments was made of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen—the same materials as were employed in constructing the tabernacle vail (Exod. xxvi. 31)—and was ornamented with similar cherubic figures. The precious stones wherewith the walls were garnished are not mentioned. 2. *The porch*. (1) Its situation: in front of the house. (2) Its dimensions: 20 cubits broad, 120 high, and 10 long (1 Kings vi. 3). The disproportion between the ground measures and the altitude has suggested the existence in this place of an error (Keil), or of an intentional exaggeration (Bertheau), though Josephus appears to have regarded it as literally correct ('Ant.,' viii. 3. 2). Ewald, who upholds the text as genuine, thinks of a tower rising above the porch to the height of 120 feet ('History of Israel,' iii. 236); but this is far from probable, indeed statically impossible, and must be rejected. On the assumption of a corrupt text, the question remains how high the porch was. Some say 20 cubits (Keil), or 10 lower than the house; others 30, *i.e.* the exact height of the house (Bertheau); a third 23, at least as high as the pillars (Merz, in Herzog; Schürer, in Riehm). (3) Its ornaments. Its interior was overlaid with fine gold (ver. 4); its entrance guarded by two massive columns. 3. *The pillars*. (1) Their names: that on the right Jachin, or, "He shall establish," meaning that in this shrine Jehovah would henceforth permanently abide (1 Kings viii. 13; Ps. lxxxvii. 5; cxxxix. 14), or that through this would the kingdom be henceforth immovably established (Ps. lxxxix. 5); that on the left Boaz, signifying "In him, or in it, is strength," and pointing perhaps to the fulness of heavenly might that resides in him who is the sanctuary's God (Isa. xlv. 24), or to the consolidation which should henceforth be given to the kingdom through the erection of this temple (Ps. cxliv. 14). Other explanations have been given, as that Jachin and Boaz were the names of the donors or builders of the pillars (Gesenius), or of two youthful sons of Solomon (Ewald), or that the two words should be read together, as if both were inscribed on each pillar, "He will establish, or may he establish, it with strength" (Thenius). Least acceptable of all solutions is that of the Fathers, that the two names were intended to point to the two natures in Christ, in whom, though appearing in a lowly garb of humanity, dwelt the fulness of Divine strength. (2) Their height: thirty-five cubits, inclusive of the chapiter of five cubits with which each was crowned (ver. 15); each shaft eighteen cubits, and each crown five cubits, or both together twenty-three cubits (1 Kings vii. 15, 16; Jer. lii. 21; Josephus, 'Ant.,' vii. 3. 4). It has been suggested that, as twice 18 are 36, the Chronicler should be regarded as stating the length of the two columns together. But as this does not get over the discrepancy, it is better to recognize that the original text has suffered some corruption. (3) Their position: before the temple. Whether within the porch (1 Kings vii. 21), perhaps supporting the roof, or outside and apart from the building, is contested. (For the arguments on both sides, the Exposition may be consulted.) The ablest art scholars who have given attention to the subject have decided for the latter (see Riehm, 'Handwörterbuch,' art. "Jachin and Boaz"). (4) Their parts: first, a hollow column of brass, eighteen cubits high as above mentioned, twelve cubits in circumference, and of metal four fingers thick; and, second, a chapiter or crown of lily-work, *i.e.* a brass cup shaped like a fully-opened lily—the under part a belly-shaped band of network, bulging out between an under and an upper row of pomegranates strung on chains; above the upper row the lily-shaped cup, or crown, decorated all over with buds, flowers, and leaves like those of lilies.

LESSONS. 1. The place due to religion in communities and individuals, the first. 2. The quality of service given to God and the Church, the best. 3. The power of art to express the ideas and emotions of religion.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter is occupied with some account of the *contents* of the house, following naturally upon the account of the structure, dimensions, and main features of the building given in the previous chapter. The parallel, so far as it goes, is found in 1 Kings vii. and viii.

Ver. 1.—**An altar of brass.** This in worthier material superseded the temporary altar of the tabernacle (Exod. xxvii. 1, 2), made of shittim wood, and its dimensions five cubits long and broad and three cubits high. Large as was the present altar of brass as compared with the altar that preceded, it fell far short of the requirements of the grand day of dedication (1 Kings viii. 64). No statement of the making of this altar occurs in the parallel. The place of it would be between vers. 22 and 23 of 1 Kings vii. But that Solomon made it is stated in 1 Kings ix. 25, and other references to its presence are found in 1 Kings viii. 22, 54, 64, etc. The position given to the altar is referred to alike in 1 Kings viii. 22 and ch. vi. 12, 13, as in the court of the temple. It may be well to note that the altar, *sacrifice*, comes first, and is first spoken of.

Ver. 2.—**A molten sea.** The Hebrew of this verse and of 1 Kings vii. 23 are facsimiles of one author, except that here קָו stands, where the parallel shows קוה, probably the fruit merely of some error in transcription. Verses like these point not to the derivation of Chronicles from Kings, but rather of both from some older common source. This sea of brass superseded the laver of the tabernacle (Exod. xxx. 18, 28; xxxi. 9; xxxv. 16; xxxix. 39). It was called a sea on account of its size. We are told in 1 Chron. xviii. 8 whence David had drawn the supplies of metal necessary for this work. The size of the diameter measured from upper rim to rim (ten cubits) harmonizes, of course, to all practical purposes, with that of the circumference (thirty cubits); it would assist questions connected with the contents of this large vessel, however, if we had been told whether the circumference were measured at the rim, or, as the form of language here used might slightly favour, round the girth. (For these questions, see ver. 5 below.) This sea for the washing of the priests significantly follows the altar. Beside the general suggestion of the need of purification or sanctification, it here reminds of the fact that the earthly priest and high priest must need the purification, which their great Antitype would not need.

Ver. 3.—**The similitude of oxen.** The parallel gives simply "knops" (*i.e.* flower-buds) in the room of this expression, and no word "similitude" at all, the characters spelling the word for "knops" being פְּקָעִים, and those for "oxen" being בְּקָרִים. The presence of the word "similitude" strongly suggests that the circles of decoration under description showed the likenesses of oxen, not necessarily (as Patrick) "stamped" on the so-called knops, but possibly constituting them. For the ambiguous under it of our present verse the parallel says with definiteness, "under the brim of it." There is intelligibility, at all events, in the ornamentation being of these miniature oxen, presumably three hundred in the circle of the thirty cubits. The symbolism would harmonize with that which dictated the superposition of the enormous vase on twelve probably life-size oxen. There is a general preference, however, accorded to the opinion that the present text has probably been the result of some copyist's corruption, and that the text of the parallel should be followed.

Ver. 4.—The words of the Hebrew text of this verse and the parallel (1 Kings vii. 25) are facsimiles.

Ver. 5.—**An handbreadth.** Not זֶרֶת, "a span" (nevertheless tabled by Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' 2nd edit., p. 79, as a handbreadth, and put at eight digits, two palms, or 5·33 inches), but טֶפַח, "the palm of the open hand," the breadth of the four fingers, which Thenius puts at 3·1752 inches, but Conder's table at 2·66 inches. It **received and held** should be translated, *it was able to hold.* **Three thousand baths.** The parallel has two thousand baths, and this latter is the likelier reading. It is, however, conceivable that the statement of Kings may purport to give the quantity of water used, and that of Chronicles the quantity which the vessel at its fullest could accommodate. As to the real capacity of the bath, we are hopelessly at sea. Josephus's estimate of it is about eight gallons and a half, that of the rabbinists about four gallons and a half (see Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' iii. 1742), and Conder, in the 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 80, a fractional quantity above six gallons. The largest bowls on the Assyrian bas-reliefs, the silver bowl of Crœsus, and the bronze bowl in Scythia (Herodotus, i. 51; iv. 81), did not, under the lowest estimate of the bath, hold as much as one-half of the contents of this vast sea of brass of Solomon. The use of this vessel was, as we read in the next verse, for the priests to wash in, or, as some would read, to wash *at* (Exod. xxx. 18—20).

Ver. 6.—This verse, with vers. 14, 15, are all here that represent the lengthy account of bases rather than lavers, occupying in the parallel vers. 27—39 of 1 Kings vii., which, however, omits to state the use of either sea or lavers.

Ver. 7.—**Ten candlesticks of gold.** The only allusion to these in the parallel is found later on in part of the forty-ninth verse of 1 Kings vii. **According to their form.** This expression, though so vague, might point to the fact that the form of the old candlestick of the tabernacle was adhered to (Exod. xxv. 31). But considering the recurrence of the same words (ver. 20), there can be no doubt that the phrase is identical in its meaning with the use found in such passages as Lev. v. 10; ix. 16, and means "according to the prescribed ordinance."

Ver. 8.—**Ten tables.** These tables also (the use of which is given in ver. 19) are not mentioned, so far as their making is concerned, in the parallel, except in its summary, ver. 48 (cf. 1 Kings vii.), where furthermore only one table, called "the table" (Exod. xxv. 23), is specified, with which agrees our ch. xxix. 18. It is hard to explain this variation of statement. It is at least an arbitrary and forced explanation to suppose that ten tables constituted the furniture in question, while only one was used at a time. Keil and Bertheau think that the analogy of the ten candlesticks points to the existence of ten tables. The question, however, is, where is the call for, or where are the indications of any analogy? **An hundred basins of gold.** The Hebrew word employed here, and translated "basins," is מִזְרְקֵי, as also vers. 11, 22, *infra;* and 1 Kings vii. 40, 45, 50; Exod. xxvii. 3; xxxviii. 3; Numb. iv. 14; but it is represented as well by the English translation "bowls" in 1 Chron. xxviii. 17; 2 Kings xxv. 15; Numb. vii. 13, 19, etc. The "pots," however, of our vers. 11, 16 has for its Hebrew הַסִּירוֹת. It were well if, in names such as these, at any rate, an absolute uniformity of version were observed in the translation, for the benefit of the English reader, to say nothing of the saving of wasted time for the student and scholar. These *basins,* or *bowls,* were to receive and hold the blood of the slain victims, about to be sprinkled for purification (see Exod. xxiv. 6—8, where the word אַגָּן is used; xxix. 12, 10, 20, 21; Lev. i. 5, and *passim;* Heb. ix. 18—20; see also Exod. xxxviii. 8; Numb. iv. 14.) The Hebrew word מִזְרָק, whether appearing in our version as "basin" or "bowl," occurs thirty-two times, sixteen in association exactly similar with the present (viz. Exod. xxvii. 3; xxxviii. 3; Numb. iv. 14; 1 Kings vii. 40, 45, 50; 2 Kings xii. 13; xxv. 15; 1 Chron. xxviii. 17; ch. iv. 8, 11, 22; Neh. vii. 70; Jer. lii. 18, 19; Zech. xiv. 20), fourteen as *silver bowls* in the time of the tabernacle for the meat offering of "fine flour mingled with oil" (viz. Numb. vii. 13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, 61, 67, 73, 79, 84, 85), and the remaining two in an entirely general application (Amos vi. 6; Zech. ix. 15). It is evident, therefore, that the מִזְרָק was not the only vessel used for holding the blood of purification, nor was it exclusively reserved to this use.

Ver. 9.—**The court of the priests** (comp. 1 Kings vi. 36, where this court is denominated the *inner* court, and any other court an *outer* one, *i.e.* the great court only implicated thereby). The construction of this court of the priests, withheld here, given there, leaves it ambiguous whether the "three rows of hewed stones and one row of cedar beams" intends a description of fence, as the Septuagint seems to have taken it, or of a higher floor with which the part in question was dignified. The citation Jer. xxxvi. 10, though probably pointing to this same court, can scarcely be adduced as any support of J. D. Michaelis' suggestion of this latter, as its עֶלְיוֹן (translated "higher") does not really carry the idea of the comparative degree at all. For once that it is so translated (and even then probably incorrectly), there are twenty occurrences of it as the superlative *excellentiæ*. The introduction just here of any statement of these courts at all, which seems at first inopportune, is probably accounted for by the desire to speak in this connection of their doors and the brass overlaying of them (1 Kings vii. 12; 2 Kings xxiii. 12; ch. xx. 5; Ezek. xl. 28; Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 370). It is worthy of note that the word employed in our text, as also ch. vi. 13, is not the familiar word חָצֵר of all previous similar occasions, but עֲזָרָה, a word of the later Hebrew, occurring also several times in Ezekiel, though not in exactly the same sense, and the elementary signification of the verb-root of which is "to gird," or "surround."

Ver. 10.—**The right side of the east end, over against the south** (so also 1 Kings vii. 39; comp. Exod. xxx. 18). The sea found its position, therefore, in the place of the tabernacle laver of old, between altar of brass and porch. It must be remembered that the entrance was *east*, but it was counted to a person standing with the back to the tabernacle or temple, as though he were, in fact, going out, not entering in, the sacred enclosure; therefore *on the right side* will be *southward*, as written in this verse.

Ver. 11.—**The pots.** As stated above, the Hebrew word is הַסִּירוֹת. It occurs in the Old Testament twenty-seven times; it is translated in our Authorized Version "pans" once and "caldrons" four times. By a manifest copyist's error, the parallel (1 Kings vii. 35) has כִּירוֹת, "lavers," by the use of *caph* for *samech*. The use of the סִיר was to boil the peace offerings, though some say they were hods in which to carry away the ashes; and it certainly is remarkable that it is no one of the words employed in 1 Sam. ii. 14. In addition to these twenty-seven times, it occurs also *four* times in Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Hosea, Nahum, with the meaning of "thorns," and once in Amos it is translated "fish-hooks." The passage in Ecclesiastes (vii. 6) is additionally remarkable, in the fact that the root occurs twice in the same sentence in its different significations, *e.g.* "the crackling of *thorns* under a pot." **The shovels.** The Hebrew word is יָעִים. This word occurs in the Old Testament nine times—in Exodus, Numbers, Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah. The use of the *shovel* was to remove the ashes. **The basins** should very probably read *flesh-hooks.*

Ver. 12.—**The pommels.** The Hebrew word is גֻּלֹּת, translated in the parallel "bowls." The word occurs in the Old Testament twelve times, and is translated six times (in Judges and Joshua) "springs," four times "bowls," and twice "pommels." It was an architectural ornament to the capital, in shape like a ball. **The chapiters** The Hebrew word is כֹּתֶרֶת, occurring twenty-three times or more, and always translated thus; in modern architecture, the head or *capital* of the pillar. **The two wreaths.** The word is שְׂבָכָה, occurring fifteen times, and translated seven times "net-work," five times "wreath," or "wreathen-work," once a "snare," once "checker-work," and once a "lattice." These *wreaths* were of some lace pattern plaiting and festoons of fancy chain-work. The fuller expression of them is found in 1 Kings vii. 17, though in description not more distinct, certainly—"nets of checker-work, and wreaths of chain-work."

Ver. 13.—**Four hundred pomegranates.** This number of pomegranates substantially agrees with the parallel (1 Kings vii. 20). There were two hundred of them on each wreath that encircled the chapiter. The pomegranate was a favourite ornament in work as well as in more solid architectural forms (Exod. xxviii. 33, 34). The popularity of the fruit as food (Numb. xiii. 23; xx. 5; Deut. viii. 8; Josh. xv. 32; xxi. 25), its simple beauty to the eye (Cant. iv. 3, 13), and its welcome homeliness, will quite account for this beside any symbolic significance that may have become attached to it. The description of the pomegranate as a fruit may be found in any Bible dictionary, but especially in Tristram's 'Natural History of the Bible.'

Ver. 14.—**Bases.** The first mention of these in Chronicles, on which so much is said in the parallel (1 Kings vii. 27—39). The Hebrew word is מְכוֹנָה, occurring eighteen times in Kings, twice in Chronicles, once in Ezra, and three times in Jeremiah. These bases were, as may be learnt more fully in the parallel, pedestals of brass four cubits square by three and a half high, supported by wheels a cubit and a half in diameter. The pedestals were richly decorated with mouldings, and with the similitudes of lions, oxen, and cherubim, and with other subordinate ornamental work, and were designed to bear the lavers, the use of which is given in ver. 6. Vers. 6—16 in our chapter strongly suggest, in their repetitiousness, the writer's resort to different sources and authorities for his matter.

Ver. 16.—**Flesh-hooks.** Hebrew, מִזְלָגוֹת, occurring twice in Exodus (xxvii. 3; xxxviii.

8), once in Numbers, and twice in Chronicles. Another form of the same root, מַזְלֵג occurs twice in Samuel, in the same sense of "flesh-hook" (1 Sam. ii. 13, 14), where also its use is made dramatically plain. **Huram his father**; *i.e.* his chief artist.

Ver. 17.—In the plain . . . in the clay; *i.e.* in the Ciccar (or *round*, equivalent to the New Testament "region round about") of Jordan, a distinctive designation of the Jordan valley (Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 213). The region here intended lies east of the river, in what became the division of Gad. Succoth lay a little to the north of the river Jabbok, which flows almost east to west into the Jordan. **Zeredathah**; *i.q. Zarthan* of 1 Kings vii. 46; and this latter is in the Hebrew also the same in characters and all with the *Zaretan* of Josh. iii. 16. Very possibly the place is the same as *Zererath* (Judg. vii. 22). The exact sites of these places are not known, though the range within which they all lay is clear (see Grove's article in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1817). **The clay ground**; that is, "the clay of the ground" (Hebrew). The radical idea of the word here translated "clay" is "thickness," which should not be rendered, as in margin, "thicknesses." The word (עָב) occurs in all thirty-five times, and is rendered a large proportion of these times "clouds" or "thick clouds" (*e.g.* Exod. xix. 9), clouds being presumably *thicknesses* in air; but if the subject-matter in question be in wood, or growing timber, or the ground, the word is rendered conformably "thick planks" (1 Kings vii. 6; Ezek. xli. 25, 26), or "thickets" (Jer. iv. 29), or "clay" (as here), to distinguish from other lighter or more friable soil.

Ver. 20.—Candlesticks . . . lamps, that they should burn after the manner before the oracle. Ten candlesticks, as we learn here and in ver. 7, supersede in Solomon's temple the *one* candlestick, with its central shaft lamp, and the three branch lamps on either side of Moses and the tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 31—37; xxxvii. 17—24; Lev. xxiv. 4; Josephus, 'Ant.,' iii. 6. § 6, 7; Maimonides [1135—1205], "De templo, vasis sanctuarii," etc.). This single candlestick was restored in Zerubbabel's temple. The present ten *candlesticks*, or strictly candelabra, of Solomon are said at one time to have been placed in a row like a rail before the veil, and connected with a chain under which the high priest went on the Day of Atonement into the inner sanctuary. The removal of these candelabra is recorded Jer. lii. 19. The expression, "after the manner," points to the various and somewhat minute regulation for the lighting, trimming, and keeping alight of the *lamps*, all or some, of the candelabra (Exod. xxvii. 19—21; Lev. xxiv. 1—3). The use of the word for "lamp" (נֵר) in some passages (1 Sam. iii. 3; 2 Sam. xxi. 17; Prov. xiii. 9; xx. 27; Ps. xviii. 29) suggests not the part as used for the whole in speaking of the candelabrum, but more probably that the *perpetual* burning was not of all seven lamps, but of one the central shaft.

Ver. 21.—The flowers; Hebrew, פֶּרַח, occurring sixteen times, of which number it is translated "flowers" thirteen times, "buds" twice, and "blossom" once. The *flower* was a part of the ornamentation of the branches of the candelabrum (Exod. xxv. 31, 33). **The tongs**; Hebrew, מֶלְקָחַיִם, occurring six times, of which number it is translated five times "tongs," but once "snuffers" (Exod. xxxvii. 23). This latter is the correcter translation, perhaps. The instrument, at any rate, was to trim the lamp-wicks (Exod. xxv. 38).

Ver. 22.—The snuffers; Hebrew, מְזַמְּרוֹת, occurring five times, and always translated "snuffers." A slightly different form of the word is translated "pruning-hooks" four times in the Prophets Isaiah, Joel, Micah. No doubt these *snuffers* were something different from the *tongs* of the preceding verse; the use of one may have been rather to cut the wicks, and the other to trim them. **The spoons**; Hebrew, כַּף. This is the word used so often for the "hand," but the essential idea of which is the *hollow* of either hand or foot or other thing, and among other things of a spoon shape. The word is used of the frankincense-cups (Numb. vii. 14, 20, 26) brought to the dedication of the tabernacle by the several princes. **The censers**; Hebrew, מַחְתּוֹת. These were "snuff-dishes" (Exod. xxv. 38; xxxvii. 23; Numb. iv. 9). **The entry of the house**; Hebrew, פֶּתַח. Some think this word refers to the door-*frames*, as distinct from the door-leaves or doors themselves. But the parallel (1 Kings vii. 50) gives us what is translated as "hinges" (Hebrew, פֹּת), a word that occurs only here in any such sense, as presumably (Gesenius, 'Lexicon') "the hollowed part of a hinge," and Isa. iii. 17 for the *pudenda muliebria*. The mistaken transcribing of a *kheth* for a *tau* will amply account for the difference.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—22.—*The altar, the sea, the light, and the bread.* The homiletics of this chapter, viewed in certain general aspects, have been already treated with these of ch. iii. But it remains to notice other interesting and important aspects of the contents of this chapter. As soon as these are exhibited in such a manner as to make their relative importance apparent, they do indeed become of marked interest.

I. First, and no doubt first in importance, we read of the great ALTAR OF BRASS. The contents of the temple begin from this. The *sacrifice* is the great feature; nay, the great fact of worship on the part of the Church on earth. By this early forecast of prophecy; by the earlier of the tabernacle; by the much earlier of the patriarchs' house and family; by one earlier even than that—by the earliest of *all*, just outside the garden of Eden, and "eastward" of it, and in the presence of "cherubim" and "flaming sword" there,—the *sacrifice* is what Scripture brings prominently to our view. Take note also of the "golden altar" (ver. 19). Well may it be that, though in every corruptest form of religion, no heathen tribe that emerges to view in our wide fields of missionary enterprise needs to be taught *one* thing, viz. the place of "sacrifice and offering" in religion, the call for it, the efficacy of it. Can we deny, all charity granted, that the lesson all this teaches nothing short of blindness can fail to see and acknowledge!

II. We notice that, second in order, comes the great SEA OF MOLTEN BRASS, with its symbolic lily-flower ornamentation. The use of the "molten sea" is expressly stated That use reminds us primarily of the need on the part of the priests of old, and of those of modern day, who in even a more real sense take their place, of *all* cleanness of hand, of deed, of word, of thought, of conscience; furthermore, of the perpetually recurring need of the cleansing and renewing of their spirit; and of this most solemn thought, that even in their holiest work impurity and defilement may be first contracted, and most disastrously. And then, by all most just and certain of inference, it reminds *all* believers, all servants of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, all saints and faithful, of their perpetual need of such purification as consists of self-examining and self-watching together with the direct and only all-sufficing sanctification of the Holy Ghost.

III. We notice, third in order, the TEN LAVERS. These, for the washing of the victims and sacrificial offerings themselves, remind us what pure offerings and genuine sacrifices all that we bring to God should be; broken and contrite hearts, simplest motives, genuine affections, and the outward objective gifts we bring, not merely ungrudged, but—best proof of the same—of our best, of what may have cost us self-denial, some preparation, some honest labour to make them a little less unworthy of the Master's work. To bring the blemished, to bring what we can so utterly dispense with, that we either do not know it is gone, or are glad *to* know it, is, in plain words, to bring *polluted* offerings.

IV. We find, next in order, the TEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS, each probably of sevenfold lamps. They were for actual light. They were typical of that yet more actual *spiritual* light that must ever be present in the true Church, must ever be witnessed to by it, and which must ever be shed forth from the true Church. We are not to forget that these, too, were made from the pattern shown in the mount. And the various and beautiful Scripture references to them are most animating to think of (see, for instance, Zech. iv. 1—3, 11—14; Rev. i. 12, 13, 20; ii. 1; xi. 3—5).

V. We have next THE TEN TABLES on which was placed the shewbread, which lay there one week, and was after that to be eaten by the priests alone. Though it is not distinctly revealed what the twelve loaves of shewbread intended, the very mystery left hanging about it enhances our interest in it, since high importance is repeatedly attached to the mention of it. It must justly be regarded as an *ordinance;* it must surely typify nourishment, and that not the mere nourishment of the body, but of very spiritual life It was the *shew*bread, *i.e. of God;* the *presence*-bread, *i.e.* of God. Was it not one perpetual standing type of *the Bread of life—the Bread* that was to come down from heaven for the life of the world?

And after these five leading declarations of the contents of the temple, and the preparation of them, there follow descriptions of several lesser ones, all beautiful, all pure and costly in their material, each with its distinct tributary service and use. Distinct attention may be invited to the seventeenth verse, specifying the place where King Hiram cast the precious metal vessels, and the pillars, etc. It must not be said that this statement may not be important, and may serve merely some perhaps *evidential* use at some time or another, in corroborating the general contents of this holy history.

Yet, if it be so, the mere suggestions it inevitably excites are worth giving some expression to. The moral suggestions of the clay ground and thickened clay, by help of which and in which the finest vessels, and most enduring monuments of metal were cast and fashioned, are fruitful. They may recall to us the very mould original of that body into which the Almighty breathed the breath of life, and countless instances in the history of the individual and of the Church, when the Master-Potter has indeed shown his sovereign power and unchallengeable right over the clay. Out of it, what vessels of grace and beauty and enduringness has not he fashioned! by aid of it, and all its humiliation, what grand results to character, discipline, and sanctification, has not he brought about! and—not the least encouragement to our faith and patience in trial, in affliction, in the horrible pit and miry clay—how has the very contrast astonished and delighted the beholding Church and world, between the methods used and the Divine results obtained! But the humble sufferer himself has been not a mere admiring beholder. His tears have been turned into smiles and joy; and even on earth he has learnt how the "suffering" has been outweighed beyond all estimate by gain, advantage, and that which he best knows to be the earnest of a certain "eternal weight of glory."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Acceptable worship.* "He made an altar of brass." This is a simple sentence enough, but it is one which had a great significance to the people of God. For to that brazen altar they came for many generations, and there they either worshipped God and gained his Divine favour, or they failed to do the one and to secure the other. It was the place of sanctity or profanation, of victory or defeat. It, with the various regulations that applied to it and provisions that were made for it, taught them, and it teaches us—

I. THAT MAN MAY MEET WITH GOD, IN WORSHIP AND COMMUNION. God is not so far removed from us in his nature, nor are we so separated from him by our sin, but that he is willing to draw nigh to us, is indeed desirous of meeting us. He is the Infinite and Eternal One, immeasurably above us; but he is our heavenly Father, profoundly interested in us and mindful of us. He is the Holy One, who hates all manner of iniquity; but he is also the Merciful One, delighting to forgive and to restore. He, therefore, not only permits his human children to meet him at his altar, in the sanctuary, but he positively enjoins this as a sacred duty; he is displeased when we neglect to do so. But, apart from its obligatoriness, it is "a good thing" for us, an exalted privilege and a most valuable opportunity, "to draw nigh to God."

II. THAT THERE HE SHOULD SEEK GOD'S MERCY. This altar of brass was to receive sacrifices; and among these, sin offerings and trespass offerings were to be conspicuous. We are to draw near to the God whom we have grieved and wronged, with the language of confession on our lips, pleading the great sacrifice as a propitiation for our sin.

III. THAT THERE HE SHOULD DEDICATE (RE-DEDICATE) HIMSELF TO HIS SERVICE. Burnt offerings (holocausts) and peace offerings as well as sin offerings were presented at that brazen altar. In the house of the Lord we are to consecrate our *whole selves* to him, and are to recognize that all we have and are is his, to be spent in his fear and service.

IV. THAT HE MUST SEE TO IT THAT BOTH HIMSELF AND HIS SACRIFICE ARE PURE. In that "molten sea" (ver. 2) the priests were to wash, that they themselves might be unspotted when engaged in their sacred work. And in the lavers (ver. 6) they were to wash "such things as they offered for the burnt offering," the "gifts and sacrifices themselves." Both offerers and offerings were to be perfectly pure when the Holy One of Israel was approached in worship. And with what purity of heart should we draw nigh to him now! It is only those who have "clean hands and a pure heart" that can "see God," or that will be accepted by him. It is only those who worship "in spirit" who *worship* him at all (John iv. 24). And as now we all—the whole Christian community—are "priests unto God," and are charged to present "spiritual sacrifices" unto him, it becomes us to remember that both (1) our own *hearts* and also (2) our *sacrifices*, i.e. our thoughts, our feelings, our purposes, our vows, our prayers, our praises, must be "clean" and pure *We* must be clean who "bear the vessels of the Lord," who speak his truth, who lead his people in prayer to himself. And the spiritual "gifts" of all who worship him must be cleansed of all impurity, of all selfishness and worldliness, of all insincerity, of all unholy rivalry or envy, that they may "come up with acceptance" in the sight of God.—C.

Ver. 7.—*Lights in the world.* There are many difficulties and disagreements about the spiritual significance of the temple furniture; but there is a general agreement as to the meaning of the "candlestick," or of these "ten candlesticks of gold" to which the text refers. As in the "Divine compartment" of the "most holy place" the Shechinah was the symbol of the Divine presence, and spoke of the Lord God of Israel as the one true Light of the world, so in the human department of the "holy place" these lights were the symbol of the Hebrew Church, regarded as the centre and source of light in the midst of surrounding darkness. And such it was. We may well regard—

I. ISRAEL AS THE SOURCE OF LIGHT. Perhaps rather as the possessor than the source, for communication between neighbouring countries was very much more limited then than it is now; and it was in its later days that the Jew was such a traveller and such a propagandist. But from the time that God made himself and his will known to Moses, down to the birth of Christ, Divine truth was known in Israel as it was not known elsewhere, and "salvation was of the Jews," as our Lord declared. Comparing the theological and ethical ideas of the people of God with those of contemporary peoples, we see how really enlightened they were. And some of the most essential doctrines, on which all Divine wisdom, and all moral excellency, and all national prosperity, and all individual well-being must always rest, were carried by the worshippers of Jehovah to Egypt, to Persia, to Rome, to still more distant countries. The light that shone in the sanctuary went forth and illumined a large space.

II. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS A SOURCE OF LIGHT. Said the great Teacher to his disciples, and through them to his Church for all time, "Ye are the light of the world." The Apostle Paul wrote to his converts at Ephesus, and through them to us, "Ye are light in the Lord." And it becomes us to do two things. 1. *Manifest the great characteristic of light—purity.* To "walk as children of light, . . . in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph. v. 8, 9); as the servants of him who himself "is light, in whom is no darkness at all;" to be "holy as he is holy." 2. *Discharge the great function of light—to reveal.* To "make manifest" (Eph. v. 13) those great verities which renew and sustain and ennoble us in heart and life. We are *so* to let our light shine that men may see our good works, and glorify our Divine Father. It does not take any prolonged study, or any range of experience, or any remarkable talent, to cause men to know the redeeming truths which restore them to God; which give them spiritual rest and abiding joy, and a hope that will not make ashamed; which build them up in manly virtues and in Christian graces; which prepare for the heavenly kingdom. Even the humbler disciples, who claim no rank in the community, may render this valuable service. (1) By living a true, faithful, earnest life, day by day, in the love of Christ; (2) by speaking familiar Christian truth to those who are willing to hear it, this good work can be wrought.—C.

Ver. 8.—*God's bounty and our response.* The significance of the table of shewbread (of which Solomon, in his desire for fulness and richness of provision, now made ten) depends on its position and on the objects it was to sustain. The table stood in the "holy place," very near to the inner sanctuary, where the presence of God was symbolized; and it bore upon it the shewbread, or "bread of presence;" this was so called because it was "the shewbread before me always" (Exod. xxv. 30), continually in the presence of God. There were also some vessels (Exod. xxv. 29) which were probably intended to receive wine ("to pour out withal"), which was the ordinary accompaniment of bread, as the source of daily sustenance. The whole arrangement pointed to—

I. A CONTINUAL RECOGNITION OF DIVINE BOUNTY. The bread and wine which largely constituted and adequately represented the provision for the nation's need were placed in the near presence of God, as the One *from whom they came.* It was well that the Israelites should be continually acknowledging that the fruit of the field was of Divine origin. They were very mindful and very proud of the great gift of the manna, which was a palpable and very remarkable provision from above—a clear produce of the power and goodness of God. They would be in danger of thinking that there was less of the Divine in the annual harvest; for this was, in part, the result of their own labour, and came gradually, by ordinary and gradual processes of nature. But Divine goodness and power were as truly in the latter as in the former. From God himself came the soil, the seed, the sunshine, the rain, the airs and winds of heaven; from him came the power that made all these work together for the germination, growth, and ripening of the grain; from him also came the knowledge and the skill which enabled the farmer to cultivate his ground and to secure his harvest; it was also of God's goodness that he required of his children the *putting forth of these powers*, both of body and mind, on the exercise of which so largely depended their health and character. The shewbread and the wine, standing where they stood, were a perpetual acknowledgment that all things which sustained and strengthened the nation came from the Lord their God.

II. A SOLEMN DEDICATION OF HUMAN STRENGTH TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. It was significant enough that "pure frankincense [was to be placed] on each row" of the loaves or cakes (Lev. xxiv. 7). "The offering of incense was embodied prayer, and the placing of a vessel of incense upon this bread was like sending it up to God on the wings of devotion" (Fairbairn's 'Typology'). It was, therefore, "a kind of sacrifice," and is spoken of (Lev. xxiv. 7) as "an offering unto the Lord." To present to God those things which are the recognized sources of sustenance and strength, is to acknowledge that our power and our resources belong to him and should be paid to him; it is, indeed, solemnly to dedicate them to his service in formal worship. We do the same thing now in our harvest thanksgiving services, and when we sing in the sanctuary hymns ascribing all our comforts and all our well-being to the good hand of our God. We only "perform our vows" when we dedicate to God, in daily life, the strength and the possessions with which he has enriched us; when we live in grateful remembrance of his love, in cheerful obedience to his will, in active and earnest endeavour to serve his children and extend his kingdom.—C.

Vers. 11—22.—*Completeness in Christian service.* Sacred service may be of two kinds: it may be feeble, slight, slovenly, wholly incomplete and unsatisfactory; or, on the other hand, it may be vigorous, effective, thorough, commanding the esteem of men and securing the commendation of Christ. The way in which Solomon's temple was built brings before us the more excellent order of service. It was characterized by—

I. SOLIDITY. The "two pillars" (ver. 12), and the character of the timber and of the gold, are suggestive of strength and solidity. Our work for Christ should have no slightness about it; it should be good, solid, durable; work that will resist the disintegrating forces about us; that may be "tried by fire" and still endure (see 1 Cor. iii. 12—15). For such a result we must not be content with stirring the emotions; we must convince the judgment, must produce conviction in the soul, must reach and win the whole spiritual nature.

II. BEAUTY. The strong pillars were ornamented with pommels, with wreaths, and pomegranates (vers. 12, 13). Beauty as well as strength was in the building of the temple, and should be in the sanctuary of God, in the service of Jesus Christ (Ps. xcvi. 6). We should introduce into the work we do for our Master all the graces that we can bring—meekness of spirit, unselfishness of purpose, conciliatoriness of tone and temper, excellency of workmanship. On the top of the pillars should be pomegranates; covering and adorning our service should be sweetness and loveliness of manner and of spirit.

III. FITNESS. "In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them" (ver. 17). That was obviously a more fitting place for such an operation than the near neighbourhood of the site of the temple. Everything in its own time and place. That which is wholly unfitted for the sanctuary may be quite right and altogether suitable and desirable in the hall or in the home. The fitness or unfitness of the surroundings of a work may make all the difference between the excellent and the objectionable, between the useful and the harmful.

IV. ATTENTION TO THE MINUTE. "Hiram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basins" (ver. 11). "And the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, made he of gold, and that perfect gold" (ver. 21). Nothing was too small or too trivial to be made by this skilled artificer, or to be made by him with the best material. There is nothing we can do in the service of our Lord that is not honourable and worthy of our manhood; nothing that we should not do to the full height of our ability.

V. ABUNDANCE. (Ver. 18.) It is not right that we should do our work in Christ's vineyard in a spirit of perfunctoriness, as the workman who will do no more than is imperatively demanded of him. Ours is not a slavery; nor are we hirelings. We are the children of God; we are the friends of Jesus Christ; we are co-workers with him; his interests are ours also; we long intensely for the coming of his kingdom. We shall not do stintingly or grudgingly what we do for him. We shall not count the hours, or the days, or the weeks we spend in his service; we shall not measure the powers we employ for his glory. We shall gladly pour forth all our faculties, shall give in "great abundance" of our resources, that his Name may be extolled, and that he may be made "very high."

VI. PURITY. All these things were made "of pure gold" (vers. 20, 22); the flowers, etc., of gold, "and that perfect gold" (ver. 21). The purest gold that could be obtained was used. The thought, the feeling, the energy, that is most perfectly refined of all dross of earthliness and selfishness, should be brought to the service of the Divine Redeemer.

VII. CONTINUANCE. "Hiram finished the work that he was to make" (ver. 11). "The end crowns the work." Well is it for the Christian workman when, having endured all criticisms, having borne all rebuffs, having met and mastered all difficulties, having submitted to all disappointments, having cheerfully wrought all his labours and having struck his last stroke, he can say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." For him is a generous commendation and a large reward (Matt. xxv. 23).—C.

Ver. 11.—*The manufacture of the temple furniture.* I. THE CHERUBIM. (Ch. iii. 10—13.) 1. *Their appearance.* Colossal winged figures; but whether, like the cherubim of Ezekiel (i. 6) and of John (Rev. iv. 7), possessed of four faces (of a man, of a lion, of an ox, of an eagle) and six wings, cannot be decided. Probably they had only one face, resembling that of a man. Unlike the cherubim in the tabernacle, which were "beaten out of one piece of gold" (Exod. xxxvii. 7), these were made of olive wood (1 Kings vi. 23), presumably on account of its durability and firmness, qualities which induced the Greeks to select it as the best material out of which to construct idols (see Riehm, 'Handwörterbuch,' art. "Oelbaum"). The woodwork was overlaid with gold. 2. *Their dimensions.* In height ten cubits (1 Kings vi. 23); their wings were each five cubits long, or twenty cubits in all. They were thus twice as broad as high, and probably altogether double in size to those on the capporeth. 3. *Their position.* In the holy of holies, their feet upon the ground, their wings touching the walls on either side, and their faces directed towards the interior of the building, *i.e.* towards the holy place, whence only an intruder could enter the secret shrine. Underneath and between their outstretched wings, the ark, with the mercy-seat and the lesser cherubim, were subsequently placed (ch. v. 8). 4. *Their meaning.* That similar winged figures are met with in the mythologies and religions of Oriental peoples, in particular of the Egyptians and Assyrians, does not prove the cherubim of Jewish theology to have been derived from those. That in those the beast-figure prevails, while in these the human face predominates, marks an essential distinction between the two. Hence the notion that among the Hebrews the cherubim had no higher significance than such winged creatures had in Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon—were, in short, merely symbols of the underlying idea common to Oriental religions, that the life of nature is identical with the life of God (Bähr)—is to be rejected. So also is the opinion that they were purely mythical figures, like the Egyptian or Greek sphinxes (the former half-man and half-lion, the latter half-woman and half-lion), or like the colossal winged lions at the doors of Babylonian and Assyrian temples (Hengstenberg, 'Egypt and the Books of Moses,' p. 153; Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften, p. 40). That they represented real beings is now generally believed (Hofmann, Kurtz, Keil, Kliefoth, and others), and appears implied in the passage where they are first mentioned (Gen. iii. 24). That they belonged to the same order of super-terrestrial existences as the angels and the seraphim of Scripture seems a necessary inference, from the fact that all three—angels (Ps. lxviii. 17), seraphim

(Isa. vi. 2), and cherubim (2 Sam. xxii. 11; Ps. xviii. 10)—are depicted as attending Jehovah in his theophanies, or manifestations of himself to men. That they were different from angels may be inferred from the fact that these are never exhibited as winged, and are usually represented as Jehovah's messengers (Ps. civ. 4), which the cherubim never are. It is not so certain that they were different from the seraphim, or shining ones (Isa. vi. 2), who in appearance, situation, and function resembled them, having six wings, appearing always in the vicinity of the self-revealing Jehovah, and proclaiming aloud the presence of his glory. Yet from the fact that they are commonly exhibited as bearers or upholders of the Divine throne (Ezek. i. 26), whereas the seraphim surround the throne (Isa. vi. 2), it may be concluded that the two, though belonging to the same order, were not the same species of being (cf. Delitzsch on Isa. to vi. 2). At the same time, whilst holding the cherubim to have been images intended to represent real existences, it need not be assumed that the actual cherubim had really the four faces of a man, of a lion, of an ox, and of an eagle. These belong to the department of symbology, in which supersensuous ideas are set forth in sensuous images. Hence, inasmuch as the human face represents the notion of intelligence, the leonine that of strength, the bovine that of endurance, and the aquiline that of keenness of vision, combined perhaps with the idea of swiftness of motion, the ascription of these to the cherubim can only mean that these heavenly beings were possessed of all the elements of a perfect life, and, as the crown and summit of creation, stood nearest God. 5. *Their function.* Comparing the Scriptures in which they are alluded to, the following may be regarded as the complex function performed by the cherubim: (1) To proclaim the Divine presence, so that, wherever they are or appear, God is (Ps. xviii. 10; Exod. xxv. 22; Ezek. i. 26); (2) to keep guard over places rendered holy by the Divine presence, so that no unholy person might irreverently intrude therein (Gen. iii. 24); and (3) to symbolize that only beings themselves perfect could stand in the presence of the glory of God (Rev. iv. 8). All three functions may be said to have been performed by the colossal figures in Solomon's temple as well as by the smaller cherubim on the capporeth in the tabernacle (see Kurtz, in Herzog's 'Real Encyclopädie,' art. "Cherubim;" Riehm, in 'Handwörterbuch,' art. "Cherubim;" Keil, 'Die Biblische Archäologie,' pp. 92, etc.).

II. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE. (Ver. 19.) 1. *Its material.* Like the other articles in the interior of the house, it was made of cedar wood and overlaid with gold (1 Kings vii. 48). That in the tabernacle was formed of shittim wood overlaid with gold; was two cubits high, one long, and one broad; was furnished with a covering, and horns of the same wood overlaid with gold (Exod. xxxvii. 25). 2. *Its position.* (1) In the holy place; and (2) immediately in front of the entrance to the holy of holies, *i.e.* before the curtain, or second veil. 3. *Its use.* As in the tabernacle (Exod. xxxvii. 29), so in the temple, it was intended for the burning of fragrant incense before the holy of holies day and night, to symbolize the adoration of Jehovah's worshipping people.

III. THE CANDLESTICKS. (Ver. 7.) 1. Their *number.* Ten. This was demanded by the larger dimensions of the temple in comparison with the tabernacle, which contained only one. 2. Their *form.* Each seven-branched, as in the tabernacle, *i.e.* consisting of a main stalk with three branches on either side, rising to the same height as that, each of the six branches and the middle stalk being crowned with a lamp (Exod. xxv. 31, etc.; xxxvii. 17, etc.). 3. Their *ornaments.* Bowls, knops, and flowers, as in the tabernacle candlestick, seeing that each in the temple was constructed "according to its form." 4. Their *utensils.* Snuffers and basins; the former to trim the wicks, the latter to receive what was removed by the process. 5. Their *use.* To keep a light continually burning in the holy place and before the holy of holies (Exod. xxv. 37; xxvii. 20). Their *material.* 6. Of gold (ver. 7), pure (ver. 20), and perfect (ver. 21). In this, again, they resembled the candlestick in the tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 31). 7. Their *position.* In the holy place, before the oracle, five on either side. 8. Their *significance.* To symbolize either (1) the light of God's favour which the worshippers or the sacred community (represented by the priest who ministered in their name) enjoyed, when their sins had been first covered by the blood shed in the fore court (Ps. xxxvi. 9; lxxxix. 15); or (2) the illumination which the Spirit-enlightened Church of God, collectively and individually, should shed forth upon the world (Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 15).

IV. THE TABLES OF SHEWBREAD. (Vers. 8, 19.) 1. Their *number.* Ten; in the tabernacle, one. 2. Their *position.* Five on either side of the holy place. The one table in the tabernacle stood upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the veil (Exod. xl. 22). 3. Their *material.* Of gold (1 Chron. xxviii. 16). 4. Their *purpose.* To receive and set forth the shewbread, or the loaves of unleavened bread, twelve on each table, which were commanded to be set before the face of Jehovah continually (Exod. xxv. 30). 5. Their *significance.* To symbolize religious truths which it concerned Israel to know. The "face loaves" were so called, not because with them or the eating of them the sight of God's face was associated, but because they stood continually in God's presence as emblematic (1) of the spiritual food Israel should present to God in the good works they should perform through Divine assistance, and (2) of the spiritual nourishment pardoned worshippers should receive from God (Exod. xxiv. 11).

V. THE BRAZEN ALTAR. (Ver. 1.) 1. Its *position.* In the interior of the fore court (1 Kings viii. 22, 64). 2. Its *dimensions.* Twenty cubits long, twenty broad, and ten high. 3. Its *material.* Brass. 4. Its *use.* To offer thereupon the burnt offerings presented by the worshippers who came to the temple.

VI. THE MOLTEN SEA. (Vers. 2—5.) 1. Its *appearance.* A huge metallic basin, supported on the backs of twelve metallic oxen—"three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east," all having their hinder parts inward. The basin had the form of a cup, decorated on the brim with flowers of lilies, underneath the brim with two rows of "knops," ten in a cubit, therefore with three hundred in all, compassing the basin around (ver. 4; cf. 1 Kings vii. 28). 2. Its *size.* Ten cubits in diameter and thirty in circumference, five cubits high and a handbreadth in thickness, with a capacity of three thousand, or, according to a more accurate measurement (1 Kings vii. 26), two thousand baths, *i.e.* upwards of twelve thousand gallons. With this may be compared the basin borne by twelve lions in the Alhambra at Granada, and the two giant sandstone vases which were found by Müller at Amathus in Cyprus, each of which was oval-shaped, thirty feet in circumference, had four handles, and rested on eight bulls, four in each half-round of the oval (see in Herzog and in Riehm, art. "Meer ehernes"). 3. Its *situation.* Between the brazen altar and the porch, on the right side of the west end, over against the south of the court (ver. 10). 4. Its *use.* For the priests to wash in when they came to engage in the sacrificial worship of the sanctuary (ver. 6; cf. Exod. xxx. 19—21). 5. Its *significance.* (1) The form and decorations of the vessel showed it was designed for priestly service. "Its form, that of an open *lily cup,* corresponded to its purpose. If all budding and blossoming signified holiness and priesthood (Numb. xvi. 7; comp. with xvii. 20, 23; Ps. xcii. 14), the flower named the white, *i.e.* the lily, must have been pre-eminently the priestly one" (Bähr). (2) The twelve oxen on which it rested accorded with the same idea. Oxen were the principal sacrificial animals, especially for the priests (Exod. xxix. 10, etc.; Lev. iv. 3, etc.; xvi. 11; Numb. viii. 8). Twelve were selected, hardly for the sake of symmetry (Thenius), or to represent the twelve months of the year (Vatke), but, like the twelve loaves of shewbread, and the twelve lions on Solomon's throne (1 Kings x. 20), to symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel, which also when in camp were placed, like the oxen, three to each quarter of the heavens (Numb. ii. 2—31). (3) The washing of the priests was emblematic of that inward spiritual purity without which none can approach a holy God, or render to him acceptable service (Isa. i. 16; Heb. x. 22). 6. Its *history.* In after years it was taken down from off the brazen oxen by Ahaz and set upon a pavement of stones (2 Kings xvi. 17); it was ultimately broken in pieces by the Chaldeans, and its brass conveyed to Babylon (2 Kings xxv. 13). The brazen oxen the Chaldean general transported as booty to the East (Jer. lii. 20).

VII. THE LAVERS. (Ver. 6.) 1. Their *material.* Brass. 2. Their *number.* Ten. 3. Their *position.* Five on the right and five on the left of the brazen altar. 4. Their *appearance.* Basins resting upon bases or pedestals with wheels (ver. 14), of which a minute description is given in the First Book of Kings (vii. 27—37). 5. Their *dimensions.* Every laver or basin four cubits in diameter. 6. Their *contents.* Forty baths, or two hundred and forty gallons. 7. Their *use.* To wash the victims in when these were brought to the priests to be offered upon the altar.—W.

Ver. 17.—*An ancient manufactory.* I. TO WHOM IT BELONGED. To Solomon the king.

II. WHERE IT WAS SITUATED. In the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredathah, both of which were in the plain of Jordan.

III. BY WHOM IT WAS MANAGED. By Hiram the artist.

IV. THE FABRICS IT PRODUCED. The articles above described, all the vessels for the house of God.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

The first verse of this chapter would have stood more fitly as the last verse of the previous chapter. The narrative, that began with the preparations for building the temple (ch. i. 18—ii. 18), and proceeded to the account of the building itself, and the making of the various needed vessels (ch. iii. 1—v. 1), now goes on to recall and recount the dedication (ch. v. 2—vii. 10), enriching the parallel (1 Kings vii. 51; viii. 1—12) by our vers. 11 (partly), 12, and 13—an enriching addition not by any means of insignificant interest. Its colouring is rich, indeed, and its sound the sound of true music.

Ver. 1.—**The things that David . . . had dedicated**; literally, Hebrew, *the holy things*; i.e. the dedicate or set apart things of David. The temple-building, which had been commenced in Solomon's fourth year, had occupied seven years in construction (1 Kings vi. 1), but another thirteen years in furnishing (1 Kings ix. 1, 2). The record of Chronicles is, of course, in some respects somewhat more sketchy than that of Kings; and the correct view of the chronology has in both writers to be sought and read between the lines. It was *when* the house and "all the work" designed "for the house of the Lord was finished," that (ver. 2) "Solomon assembled the elders," etc., and arranged for the solemn dedication; that is, when four years of his reign, and seven years of building and thirteen years of furnishing, etc., had elapsed.

Ver. 2.—Comparing the language of this and the following verse with that used on the occasion of David's bringing up of the ark to Zion, found in 2 Sam. vi. 1; 1 Chron. xiii. and xv., some have thought that a considerable difference of tone is perceptible, and that indication is given of the intention, or at any rate a feeling, even if more or less unconscious, on the part of Solomon, that times were ripe for a demonstration, that should partake less of the enthusiasm of the mass, so far as his own summons might be concerned, and more of the form and dignity of the chief and representative men of the nation. This view can hardly be pressed. The very word "wherefore" in ver. 3 goes far to discredit it. And any difference that may be apparent in the language is far more probably and easily attributable to the old cause of the narrower, though intenser, interest of the writer of Chronicles.

Ver. 3.—**In the feast which . . . in the seventh month**; *i.e.* the Feast of Tabernacles. This commenced on the fifteenth of the seventh month, named Ethanim (see 1 Kings viii. 2). With this the festivals of the sacred year closed.

Ver. 4.—**The Levites.** So see Numb. iv. 15, 19, 20, which, with our vers. 5, 7, throw this statement into sufficient harmony with that of the parallel (1 Kings viii. 3), which purports to say that the *priests* only, unaided by the Kohathite Levites, performed the service.

Ver. 5.—In the parallel (1 Kings viii. 4), the "and" in the last line of this verse does not need the italic type, but is found in the Hebrew text, confirming our version of ver. 4 foregoing. **The tabernacle of the congregation**; or, *tent of meeting*, designs here the tabernacle of Moses from Gibeon (comp. 1 Kings iii. 4; 1 Sam. xxi. 6; 1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40; ch. i. 3), and not the tent of Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17). This tabernacle, then, and these holy vessels all, are carried into the new temple, as venerated relics and sacred mementoes of a memorable past of vicissitude. But the ark had still its ministry to perform (ver. 7).

Ver. 6.—**King Solomon and all the congregation . . . sacrificed**; *i.e.*, of course, with the intervention of their priests.

Ver. 7.—**The wings of the cherubim** (see ch. iii. 10). Their situation was by the west wall of the oracle (1 Kings vi. 16).

Ver. 9.—**They drew out**; *i.e.* the staves projected. A similar intransitive occurs in Exod. xx. 12. **Were seen from the ark.** The words, "from the ark," are here probably by misposition, and should follow the words, the staves projected; while the parallel tells us what should be in their place here, namely, "from the holy place" (1 Kings viii. 8). The confusion and omission will merely lie with some copyists, for five manuscripts show the words "from the holy place." **There it is unto this day.** The parallel (1 Kings viii. 8) reads, "there they are unto this day," i.e. the staves. In either case, whether the ark or the staves were spoken of, the memorandum is exceedingly interesting and noteworthy, as a patent bare copy of an old record dating before the destruction of the temple, on the part of whether the writer of Kings or Chronicles. Plainly the historian touches ground, and shows us that *we* do also; for it is evident that, far from cunningly devised fable, he has before him in either case an *original* document.

Ver. 10.—**Nothing in the ark save the two tables** (see Deut. x. 5; and Exod. xl. 20; then xxiv. 12; xxv. 16; xxxi. 18; xxxii. 19; xxxiv. 1, 4, 29; xl. 20). The stones were therefore now, in Solomon's time, nearly four hundred and ninety years old. Why the "golden pot" and "Aaron's rod" (Heb. ix. 4) were not there does not appear. The language of the Epistle is partially confirmed, at any rate in harmony with Exod. xvi. 34; Numb. xvii. 10. Possibly they may have *now* been removed by Solomon, but it seems very unlikely that, if so, no mention of the removal is made. On the other hand, the "book of the Law" had not been consigned to the ark, but to a place "by the side of" it (Deut. xxxi. 25—27).

Ver. 11.—The parallel (1 Kings viii. 10) shows the first half of this verse and the last sentence of ver. 13 to make its tenth verse. All between these two is special to the present passage and to Chronicles. **All the priests . . . not by course**; *i.e.* all of all the courses, twenty-four in number, instead of only the one course on daily duty at the time (1 Chron. xxiii. 6—32; xxiv. 1—31). **Present**; or, *found* more literally; that is to say, all who were not for one cause or another out of reach (1 Chron. xxix. 17; Ezra viii. 25). The Hebrew word is the familiar הַנִּמְצְאִים.

Ver. 12.—This verse, marked off in the Authorized Version in brackets, is most graphic. First all the priests, who were not *hors de combat*, i.e. all the "courses" of them together, thronged the arena; and now they are joined by all the Levites who were singers, of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun (1 Chron. xxv. 1—31), *i.e.* twenty-four choirs in one, with their sons and their brethren; and this collected choir is arrayed in white linen; and they have three kinds of musical instruments—cymbals (Ps. cl. 5) and psalteries (or lutes) and harps (1 Chron. xvi. 5; xxv. 1); and they take up their station at the east end of the altar, and still further a strong support flanks these of a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets (1 Chron. xvi. 6). So ends our inopportune Authorized Version parenthesis. But to what all this? It is a scene in a nation's history, in the universal Church's history; it is witnessed from heaven. and by Heaven's will recorded in the book on earth, which will endure through all generations, as long as the sun and moon endure, as ushering in the moment when, as described in the next verse, to the unanimous fervent adoration and praise of man, God bent a willing, gracious ear, and to earth the glory of heaven drew nigh. *Cymbals.* The word used here (מְצִלְתַּיִם), denoting strictly "pair of cymbals," occurs eleven times in Chronicles, once in Ezra, and once in Nehemiah. Another form of essentially the same word occurs once in 2 Sam. vi. 5 and twice in Ps. cl. 5. This last passage notes two kinds of cymbals—the "loud" and the "high-sounding." It was the former of these that Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun used, and their use was probably to regulate or beat the time (see Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 375, 376; Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 167, 2nd edit.). *Psalteries* (נֶבֶל). This word occurs twenty-eight times in the Old Testament, but of these it is translated (Authorized Version) four times as "viols" (Isa. v. 12; xiv. 11; Amos v. 23; vi. 5); it is also once rendered "vessels of *flagons*" (Isa. xxii. 24), but the margin offers the version "instruments of viols." While the cymbal was, of course, an instrument of percussion, the psaltery was one of strings—its use was as an accompaniment to the voice. The first mention of it is very interesting (1 Sam. x. 5). Compare also David's and Solomon's psaltery in 2 Sam. vi. 5; ch. ix. 11. *Harps* (כִּנּוֹר). This word occurs forty-two times, beginning with Gen. iv. 21. *Trumpets* (חֲצֹצְרָה). This word (including eleven of the personal forms of it, as *e.g.* the person *blowing the trumpet*) occurs just forty times, beginning with Numb. x. 2. It was the straight *tuba*, and was not, therefore, the same with the ram's-horn shaped *buccina* (שׁוֹפָר), generally rendered in the Authorized Version "cornet," but sometimes "trumpet;" the specialty of the cornet being to blow a sound for a signal or summons of some sort, whether secular as in war, or sacred as for some festival. The *trumpets* of our verse evidently (Numb. x. 8) were in a particular sense the instrument of the priests.

Ver. 13.—It cannot but be that it was intended in this verse that attention should be rivetted to the fact of the splendid consentaneity of all singers and all musicians, of hearts and voices and instruments. The suggestion is as significant as it is impressive, a suggestion to the Church of all time, and supremely asking notice *now*. **Even the house.** The close of ver. 14, as also the parallel (1 Kings viii. 11), justifies the supposition that the Septuagint showing the word δόξης, guides us rightly in restoring the word "glory" (כָּבוֹד) here, in place of the word "house" (בֵּית). **For he is good** (so 1 Chron. xvi. 34; Ps. cxxxvi. 1; ch. vii. 3; Ezra iii. 11).

Ver. 14.—**The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud** (so Exod. xl. 34, 35).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The first worship in the finished temple.* The homiletic matter of this chapter may be said to be one. For we are, in fact, brought face to face with *the central interest*—the mystic presence, and veiled glory of the tabernacle or temple, in connection with the outer worship—the whole form of the outer worship of the Church visible of God's ancient people. This central interest means *the ark*—the ark of the covenant; the ark, with its two Divine autograph tables of stone; the ark, with the mercy-seat upon it, and its overshadowing guardian cherubim. This ark is now to be installed in the place of long "rest"—long, though indeed it ought to have been so much longer. We may notice—

I. In the first place, THE SOLEMN, SEDULOUS CARE with which "the king, and all the heads of the tribes, and the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel," drawing upon their chastened memories of former error, neglect, irreverence, and consequent disastrous punishment, brought up from the city of David, even Zion, that ark by the hands and under the strict escort of its proper conservers, viz. "the priests, the Levites."

II. That the occasion was one observed and celebrated with UNTOLD, UNNUMBERED SACRIFICES.

III. Looking into the real significance of the ark, so far as we can determine it, we are called to notice the TREMENDOUS SANCTION implied in THE COVENANT. The heads of a complete moral law for all the world, world without end, are surely what is to be understood to be written, in the handwriting of God, graven on those tables. The covenant of mercy rests, and is based upon, these "observed and done." From the moment that the dawning *im*possibility of observing these takes any shape (however dim to the merely self-trustful and self-confident), the prefigured form of the cross, however dim it also be, begins to take shape. There are countless sacrifices "before the king, before the ark"—they are all speaking the "of necessity" (Heb. viii. 3) that arises out of the significance of that ark, or rather of that which is embodied in it. No wonder, then, that its ordained symbolizing of the Divine presence should be so mysterious, so deep, yet ever, as a fact, so reverently asserted and fenced. It is within the veil; it is in the most holy place; it is unseen, unvisited except "once a year;" the cloud of awe and of glory, of darkness and of radiancy, is *its* visitant; it is the consecrate site of the Shechinah, before which a marvelling and adoring people wait, gaze, bow down, "as seeing the invisible" One!

IV. Lastly, THE DEEP SATISFACTION that results to the Church of God from a genuinely deep impression of his presence abiding in and with it. It was when the full chorus of adoring praise and joyful devotion, because of "the Lord and the ark of his strength having arisen into their rest" (Ps. cxxxii. 8), resounded with leaping tumult of holy gladness, that "the cloud filled the house," and that "the glory of the Lord filled the house." All this was but the sensible projecting, for the earlier Church, of the greater spiritual facts and realities with which the Church of modern day is well acquainted, although it ought to be so much better acquainted with them than it is.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Conclusion.* "Thus all the work that Solomon made . . . was finished." Better is the end of some things than the beginning, though there are other things in which the beginning is better than the end. It is matters of *achievement* in which the end is so honourable and so desirable.

I. IT IS GROUND FOR CONGRATULATION. We may congratulate ourselves and receive the felicitation of our friends that we have been spared long enough in health and strength; that we have had patience to endure all the vexations, skill and determination to surmount all the difficulties, resolution to proceed in spite of all the disappointments that we have been called to confront; that we have had the steadfastness of soul that enabled us to pursue our aim until the goal was reached and the work was done. The path of human life is strewn with failures, with abortive attempts to do what was unattainable, with half-built towers which those who began but were unable to finish (Luke xiv. 28—30); well will it be for us if those who shall speak or write of us are able to record that we finished what we took in hand. Persistency is a characteristic to be carefully cultivated, and to be exemplified all through our life.

II. IT IS AN OCCASION FOR THANKFULNESS. 1. That we have been able to conclude any work on which we have set our heart, if it be a right and worthy ambition we have cherished, is reason enough for gratitude to God. For all bodily health, all mental faculty all moral vigour and capacity, have come ultimately from him. 2. And if we have been able to do something *that will last*, we have especial reason for thankfulness. What better thing can we hope for or deserve than that we should be the means of effecting that which will be speaking and working when our tongue is silent and our hand is still in death? We should bless our God with peculiar fervour that he has thus employed us; that, through his grace and power resting upon us and our endeavour, we have so wrought that, when we are dead, we shall still be speaking (Heb. xi. 4); that, perhaps, long years and even generations after we have been forgotten, the work we did will be imparting a blessing to the children of men, to heal, to comfort, to enlighten, to renew.

III. IT MAY BE A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION. When Solomon finished the building of the temple he had many years to reign; there was abundance of strength and energy remaining in him to begin and finish other works. And if we are rightly affected by what we have wrought, we shall not say, "I have accomplished something; I will now take my ease and spend my time in enjoyment." On the contrary, we shall say, "I have proved that it is in my power to do one good thing for my Master and my fellow-men; I will commence another. I will still further trust the kindness of my heavenly Father, and draw upon his resources with which to labour and to persevere, until the end again crowns the work." So the conclusion of one solid achievement will be an inspiration to begin another, as *it has been* in very many instances in the lives of the good and true.—C.

Ver. 1 (latter part).—*Dedication, permitted and desired.* We have here—

I. THE DEDICATION WHICH GOD PERMITTED. God did not allow David to build the temple, because he had been "a man of war, and had shed blood" (1 Chron. xxviii. 3); it was fitting that the house of the Lord, the "God of peace," should be built by a sovereign whose very name spoke of peace, and whose reign was pacific. But God permitted David to dedicate to the service of the temple the spoils he had taken in war. It was, apparently, those spoils which he had taken from Syria, Moab, Ammon, etc., after his successful battles, that he "dedicated unto the Lord," which Solomon now "brought in" (see 2 Sam. viii. 9—12). But they do not seem to have had the higher honour of being used in the services of the temple; they were stored "among the treasures of the house," only to be occasionally brought out and admired. Some things there were which might not, on any conditions whatever, be accepted as offerings to the Lord. But these spoils were taken in wars which were honourably conducted, and which at that time, in that twilight of history, were fought out with a perfectly clear conscience; they might, therefore, be dedicated to the Lord, and "put among the treasures" of the temple. We may be right in carrying our trophies and depositing them in our churches and cathedrals, but it is only by a gracious Divine permission that we can dedicate to him that which has been wrested from our brother's hands by violence. This is the lowest, the least precious and acceptable form which our dedication of substance can take. We must look about for that which is worthier of ourselves, more consonant with the peaceable and spiritual economy under which we live, more pleasing in the sight of the Lord of love.

II. THE DEDICATION WHICH GOD DESIRES. There are three things which our God not only *allows* us to dedicate to himself, but *desires* that we should do so. 1. *Of the products of our peaceful industry.* These may be *in kind*, as they were, very largely, under Judaism—the creatures taken from flocks and herds, or the produce of the field and garden; as they still are in semi-civilized communities, in islands recently reclaimed from idolatry and barbarism. Or they may be in *current coin*, in money. There is no precept requiring Christian men to devote a particular proportion of their earnings to the cause of Christ and man. But they are *at liberty to do so*; and if they do this, freely, conscientiously, and in the spirit of gratitude and attachment to the Person and the kingdom of their Lord, they do that which will be acceptable to him—a source of continual sacred satisfaction to themselves, and a material contribution to the welfare of others. 2. *Of the culture of our faculties.* We may dedicate to the cause of Jesus Christ generally, and to the service of the house of the Lord particularly, the trained power and skill we have acquired—in music and sacred song, in oratory and persuasiveness, in architecture and ornamentation. But it may be said, speaking more broadly, that our God is desiring and demanding of us the dedication: 3. *Of ourselves and our whole life.* Our will, that it may be subjected to his will; our heart, that its affection may be yielded to our Divine Friend; our understanding, that our mental powers may be exercised for the glory of his Name and the furtherance of his kingdom; our days and hours, that they may all be spent consciously in his presence, and continuously in his service and honour. This is the true dedication; and the little child that thus dedicates its powers and days to the service of its Saviour may be doing more for God than the royal king setting apart golden vessels to be "put among the treasures" of the sanctuary.—C.

Vers. 2—13.—*Bringing in the ark.* It was fitting enough that the ark which had been in the ancient tabernacle should be brought with much ceremony into the new temple. It linked the past and the future, and it associated two things which must be constantly kept together. It suggests to us—

I. THE TRUE NATIONAL CONTINUITY. This was not found at all in the permanence of one form of government, for that had passed from a theocracy to a monarchy; nor was it found only or even chiefly in the descent by blood of one generation from another; nor in the continuance of the same social customs. It was found in the faithfulness of the people to the Lord their God; in the perpetuity of the national faith and, consequently, of the national morals and habits of life. The code of religious and ethical law which God gave to them through Moses was to remain the statute law of the realm. It was to be placed, on the most solemn occasion, under the most striking and memorable conditions, in the most sacred place of the sacred building in the holy city (vers. 7—10). The nation that changes its faith is itself changed; it is not the same, but another nation. The people that remain loyal to their God and true to their ancient convictions are the same people, however their institutions and customs may be modified by "time and change."

II. THE TWO GREAT COUNTERPARTS OF DIVINE SERVICE. Much was made of the altar of sacrifice; indeed, the temple was *the* place of sacrifice. There, and there only, could offerings be presented and sin be expiated. But in the most holy place, beneath the "mercy-seat," at the very point where the blood was sprinkled on the great Day of Atonement, was the ark which held the tables of stone; and on these was inscribed the epitome of law, the demand for obedience. Sacrifice (or worship, as it is now) and obedience are the two great complementary parts of the service of God (see homily on ch. i. 3—5).

III. THE BEST SERVICE OF WORLDLY DIGNITY. We learn (ver. 2) that "the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes," assembled on this occasion; they lent the weight of their social dignity to it. They did well to do this. There is nothing in which any kind of earthly distinction can be so well engaged as in promoting the piety of the people, in attaching them more firmly to their sacred principles, connecting them with and committing them to the service of the living God. Sad is it indeed when rank uses its influence to undermine the faith; admirable and honourable is it when exalted station spends its strength in advancing the devotion and the integrity of the people.

IV. THE JOYOUSNESS THAT BELONGS TO DIVINE WORSHIP. It was surely right that the first act of worship associated with the temple should be accompanied by a *feast* rather than by a *fast* (ver. 3). It was right that the choir should unite "in praising and thanking the Lord" (ver. 13). In the service of One to whom such ascription can be rendered as is offered to the Lord (ver. 13), the sound of holy gladness should be the prevailing note.

V. THE NEARNESS OF HUMAN APPROACH AND DIVINE MANIFESTATION. (Vers. 13, 14.) Let us draw nigh unto God in praise and prayer, and he will draw nigh unto us in the best proofs of his presence, in the most valuable manifestations of his power and grace.—C.

Vers. 13, 14.—*God's glory in the sanctuary: church-opening sermon.* Profoundly subdued and solemnized indeed must those worshippers have been on this great occasion When, in the presence of the sovereign and of all the elders of Israel, the priests brought the ark of the covenant into its place, into the holy of holies; when they reverently withdrew from that innermost sanctuary, which was only to be entered once in the year by the high priest only; and when, amid the sound of many trumpets and the loud voice of sacred song, the sanctuary was suddenly filled with that luminous cloud which symbolized and assured the presence of Jehovah;—the supreme moment had arrived in the history of the sacred building: "for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God." If we ask the question—When may it be truly said of our Christian sanctuaries that "the glory of God has filled" them? we should say it is when—

I. GOD'S PRESENCE IS REALIZED BY THOSE WHO WORSHIP WITHIN THE HOUSE. When they who meet one another there are profoundly conscious that they have come to meet God; that the Lord of all power and truth and grace is present in the midst of them—as *truly*, though not as *manifestly*, present as he was in the temple when "the house was filled with a cloud." It is a deep and strong sense of God's nearness to us that makes that to be "holy ground" on which we stand.

II. GOD'S SPIRITUALITY IS RECOGNIZED AND HONOURED. God is glorified when he is truly and acceptably worshipped by his human children. And he *is thus* worshipped when he is approached and honoured as a Divine Spirit (John iv. 23, 24; Phil. iii. 3); when worship is essentially and predominantly *spiritual*; when the service is not merely or mainly that of the lip or the hand, but of the mind, of the heart, of the will; of the intelligent, fervent, determining spirit; when prayer and praise and "inquiry" (Ps. xxvii. 4) are the devout actions of the soul.

III. GOD'S NATURE AND CHARACTER ARE PRESENTED IN THEIR FULNESS. When he is not represented in a way that is needlessly and culpably partial and misleading, but when he is made known with the fulness with which he has revealed himself to us; when the message that is declared concerning him is that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," and also that "God is love," love being the chief, the commanding, the crowning feature of his character; when he is presented as the Author of law, and also "the God of all grace," and "the God of our salvation;" when he is made known as the Divine One, who punishes all iniquity (both in the body and in the spirit), and who also pardons sin and restores the offender to his favour and his friendship; when not only the grandeur of his holiness, but also the glory of his goodness (Exod. xxxiii. 19) are upheld before the eyes of men; when he is preached as the universal Sovereign, holding all hearts and lives in his control, and also as the Divine Father, deeply interested in all his children, and seeking their return to his likeness and to his home;—then the "glorious God" is seen by those who have "eyes to see" the highest and the best.

IV. GOD'S GRACIOUS POWER IS MANIFESTED. When, in the Person and by the power of his Divine Spirit, he takes possession of the mind and heart of those who are gathered in his presence; when he thus inspires the teacher who speaks in his Name, quickens and animates the hearts of his people, renews the will and regenerates the spirit of those who entered his house unreconciled to his rule. This, his gracious action, is that manifestation of his glory which we should most eagerly desire and should most sedulously seek; it is to be found by purity and prayer (see Matt. v. 8; 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19; Luke xi. 13).—C.

Vers. 1—14.—*The dedication of the temple: 1. The bringing-in of the ark.* I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE CEREMONY. (Vers. 1—4.) 1. *The completion of the temple furniture.* The manufacture of the various articles having been described in the preceding chapter, it is here briefly recorded that the whole work which Solomon made for the house of the Lord was finished—a happy illustration of the proverb, "Better is the end of a thing," etc. (Eccles. vii. 8). The work, difficult and varied as well as laborious and costly, had been carried to a successful termination. Of how few human undertakings can this be affirmed! 2. *The placing in the temple of the dedicated treasures.* These were the gold, silver, and brass David had taken from the nations he conquered; the *spolia opima* he had piously consecrated to Jehovah, to be used for sacred purposes (2 Sam. viii. 7—12; 1 Chron. xviii. 7—11). So immense had been the quantity of precious metal prepared beforehand by David for the house of the Lord (1 Chron. xxii. 14—16), that it had not been all used. What remained after the temple and its utensils had been constructed was brought into the sacred edifice and lodged among the treasures of the house of God, probably in one or more of the side chambers of the building. An act of filial piety on the part of Solomon thus to respect the will and purpose of his deceased father, who had designated, not a part merely, but the whole of the just-mentioned wealth to the service of Jehovah, it was also an example of strict conscientiousness on the monarch's part to abstain from either appropriating the surplus wealth to himself or employing it for civil purposes. The money, given by David to Jehovah, was Jehovah's and not Solomon's. Having been meant for the service of Jehovah, it was not free to be diverted to other ends and uses. Hence it was solemnly laid up among the treasures of the house of God. 3. *The selection of a date for the ceremony.* The time fixed was the Feast of Tabernacles, which commenced on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, called *Ethanim* in Hebrew, but in Aramaic *Tisri.* This was one of the three principal religious festivals of the Jews (Exod. xxiii. 14, 17). Intended to commemorate the birth-night of Israel as a nation (Lev. xxiii. 33—43), and the goodness of Jehovah to his people year by year in giving them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons (Deut. xvi. 13—15), it was a period of special and intense rejoicing. Commonly esteemed the greatest feast of the three, it was sometimes spoken of as "the feast" (ch. vii. 8, 9), was usually attended by large numbers of the people, and "was kept by the Hebrews as a most holy and most eminent feast" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 4. 1). It was thus peculiarly appropriate for the dedication of the temple, in the successful erection of which God's goodness to the nation had culminated. In this light, doubtless, it was regarded by Solomon, who observed it "splendidly and magnificently" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 4. 5), protracting it for twice seven days, instead of eight as the Law enjoined, and himself feasting together with his people before the temple. From a statement in 1 Kings ix. 1, 2, that Jehovah appeared to Solomon in answer to his prayer of dedication only after the erection of his palace, it has been inferred (Thenius, Keil) that the dedication did not take place till thirteen years after the temple was finished; but this, to say the least, is far from probable. Another unlikely suggestion is that the Feast of Tabernacles referred to was that of the eleventh year, *i.e.* of the year in which the temple was finished (Ewald, Bertheau); but as the building was not ended till the eighth month of that year (1 Kings vi. 38), the dedication must in this case have taken place before the structure was completed. The best conjecture is that the date was the Feast of Tabernacles in the following year (Bähr), which would allow sufficient time for all necessary arrangements, in particular for the step to be next mentioned. 4. *The assembling of the people's representatives in Jerusalem.* As the transportation of the ark from the city of David to Mount Moriah and its permanent settlement in the temple was designed to be a national act, it was requisite that the people's official heads should be convened for that purpose. Accordingly, the king issued orders that on the day fixed for the momentous ceremonial, the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the following year, "the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel," should meet with him in the capital. In answer to the royal summons, "all the elders of Israel came," "from the entering in of Hamath," the northern boundary of Palestine, "unto the river of Egypt," its southern frontier. Few spectacles are more impressive or becoming than that of a monarch and his people co-operating in works that aim at the good of the commonwealth, and especially at the advancement of true religion in the land.

II. THE STEPS IN THE CEREMONY. (Vers. 5—13.) 1. *The fetching of the ark from the city of David to the temple.* This was done by such of the Levites as were also priests (vers. 5, 7; cf. 1 Kings viii. 3), to whom on high occasions the duty belonged (Josh. iii. 6; vi. 6); though, while the Church was in the wilderness, the task of bearing about the sanctuary from station to station devolved upon the sons of Kohath, who at the same time were charged not to touch any holy thing lest they should die (Numb. iv. 15).

In David's day also, when the ark was brought from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David, the work of carrying the sacred symbol was performed by the priests and Levites (1 Chron. xvi. 1—15). Now, when it required to be removed to its permanent resting-place on Mount Moriah, the same religious officers were deputed to the honourable service of uplifting and bearing it along. The city of David, the original Jebusite fortress (2 Sam. v. 7), lay upon Mount Zion, on the opposite side of the Tyropœan valley from that on which the temple stood, the distance being probably about three quarters of a mile. While one detachment of priests and Levites proceeded to Mount Zion in search of the ark, it is probable that another went to Gibeon for the old Mosaic tabernacle which still stood in that ancient city, upon which Solomon had offered sacrifice in the beginning of his reign (1 Chron. i. 3), and which it was now desirable to fetch into one place with the ark. The two companies, it may be imagined, arranged to meet at the temple gate—the one with the ark of the covenant, to be established in the holy of holies between the cherubim; the other with the sanctuary or tabernacle of the congregation, with its sacred vessels, to be laid up in one or other of the already mentioned side chambers of the house. 2. *The offering of sacrifice before the ark in the temple court.* Before the sacred chest passed out of sight and into its sunless retreat within the veil, this ceremony presided over by the sovereign, was carried through by another company of priests, and in presence of "all the congregation of Israel." The sheep and oxen laid upon the altar could not be told for multitude. The First Book of Kings and Josephus mention that the king sacrificed twenty-two thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. In any case, the offering was munificent, and corresponded to the magnificence of the occasion. The monarch probably felt that Jehovah's grace to himself and his people demanded generous acknowledgment. Cf. David's offerings on bringing the ark to Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 6, 18) and Josiah's on a similar occasion (ch. xxxv. 7). 3. *The placing of the ark in the holy of holies.* While the blood of the sacrificial victims was flowing in the outer court, the priests at a given signal once more uplifted the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and, advancing with it towards the dwelling, passed in through the holy place, entering the inner shrine and reverently setting it between the wings of the colossal cherubim there erected. So immense were these figures that their wings overshadowed both the ark and its staves. It is probable that the staves were in the long side of the ark (Josephus, 'Ant.,' iii. 6. 5), and that this ran from north to south of the holy of holies. As, moreover, the staves were designed to be inseparable from the ark (Exod. xxv. 15), they were not removed, but merely drawn out, perhaps two in each direction; or they were so long (Revised Version), *i.e.* extended so far in each direction, that their ends might be seen by one standing in the doorway or immediately in front of the oracle, but not by one who stood without or at a distance in the holy place. Thus located, the ark remained in its shrine until the temple was destroyed. The phrase, "unto this day" (cf. ch. ix. 21; xii. 19; 2 Kings viii. 22), need only signify that the Chronicler used a manuscript composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, and deemed it unnecessary to alter words which were accurate enough from the standpoint of the original writer. Whether the ark was at any time borne before the Israelitish armies to battle, as in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. iv. 4), cannot be determined; but it seems to have been removed from its place in the days of Manasseh, as it underwent a kind of second consecration at the hands of Josiah, who, in the eighteenth year of his reign, replaced it in the temple with imposing ceremonies (see ch. xxxv. 3). In Solomon's time the ark contained nothing but the two tables of stone, which Moses put therein at Horeb. There is no reason to suppose it ever contained aught else, the golden pot and Aaron's rod (Heb. ix. 4) having been originally appointed to be laid up before the Lord (Exod. xvi. 33), and before the testimony (Numb. xvi. 10), not necessarily inside the ark. 4. *The giving of thanks before the altar.* On emerging from the holy place into the court, the priests united with the rest of their brethren, and the Levites who were singers, in raising an anthem of praise to Jehovah, who had enabled them to carry forward their work to a successful termination. The whole body of the priesthood were present, the divisional arrangements made by David (1 Chron. xxiv. 3), by which they waited in turns, having been suspended, and the entire force consecrated for the occasion. The Levites, marshalled according to their families, the Asaphites on the right, the Hemanites in the centre, the Jeduthites on the left, each with their sons and brethren, were arrayed in byssus.

or white linen—a dress not prescribed by the Law for the singers, but not forbidden (Bertheau)—and furnished with cymbals, trumpets, and other instruments of music (cf. 1 Chron. xxv. 1). The priests, a hundred and twenty in number, and the Levitical singers, probably two hundred and eighty-eight (1 Chron. xxv. 7), standing on the east of the great altar of burnt offering, while the trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments discoursed what was meant to be melodious music with one voice, praised and thanked the Lord, saying, "For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." Cf. the jubilation of David on fetching the ark from the house of Obed-edom (1 Chron. xv. 28).

III. THE CONCLUSION OF THE CEREMONY. (Vers. 13, 14.) "The house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord;" and again, "the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God;" concerning which may be noted: 1. *What this was.* The notion that this was the smoke-cloud from the offerings on the brazen altar, which swept into the holy place as the priests emerged (Bertheau), is untenable. The phenomenon which now occurred was manifestly the same which had taken place on the completion of the tabernacle (Exod. xl. 34). The cloud was not the "bright and streaming cloud" called by the rabbins the Shechinah (Thenius), nor was the "glory of the Lord" the same thing as the "cloud" (Bähr); but the "glory of the Lord" was the beaming radiance of fire (Exod. xxiv. 16), the resplendent appearance of light with which, as a heavenly Being, Jehovah is surrounded (Exod. iii. 2; xiii. 21); the "cloud" was the robe of darkness in which that "glory" was wrapped, and by which it was veiled from mortal sight (Exod. xix. 9, 16; Lev. xvi. 2). 2. *What it signified.* (1) That Jehovah graciously accepted the finished structure which had been laboriously prepared for his dwelling, as formerly he had accepted the tabernacle at the hands of Moses and his contemporaries (Exod. xl. 34), and as he still accepts at the hands of his believing people their works of faith and labours of love (Heb. vi. 10). (2) That God would condescend to establish in it his presence, as of old he had done in the tabernacle, and as afterwards he would do in the temple of Christ's humanity (John i. 14), yea as he still does in hearts that open to receive him (2 Cor. vi. 16). (3) That God would considerately accommodate the manifestations of himself to the feebleness and imperfection of his worshippers, then as in the days of Moses, coming to them in a cloud as he did to the Church in the wilderness, as in the fulness of the times he came to men in the Person of his Son, with glory veiled and majesty concealed, and as he still reveals himself to his worshippers, according to the measure of their capacities (Eph. iv. 7), and in every instance "through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). 3. *When it happened.* (1) When the priests had come out of the holy place. "This is the way of giving possession. All must come out, that the rightful Owner may come in. Would we have God dwell in our hearts? We must leave room for him, let everything else give way" (Henry). (2) When the priests and Levites had arranged themselves at the east end of the altar. The choice of this as their situation, probably dictated by local convenience, was nevertheless significant. It symbolized that only on the basis of sacrifice, or through the mediation of atoning blood, could either men come to God or God approach to men (Heb. ix. 7, 22; x. 19). (3) When the whole company were of one mind. This also an indispensable preliminary to either Church or individual receiving a Divine visitation. The Church of Pentecost was of one accord when it obtained the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 14; ii. 1). Being pre-eminently the God of peace (Rom. xv. 33; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 23; Heb. xiii. 20), and having called his people to peace (1 Cor. vii. 15), God cannot dwell either in the midst of communities (sacred or civil) that are torn by strife and marred by factions, or in the hearts of individuals that are distracted by care or divided by worldliness. (4) Whilst the anthem was ascending. At the moment the trumpeters and singers were engaged in thanking and praising God for his goodness and mercy. That shewed the proper attitude of soul for all true worshippers, and in particular for such as are expectant of favours. Faith in the Divine existence and Divine goodness there must be (Heb. xi. 6), but gratitude for past mercies is no less indispensable (Phil. iv. 6). 4. *How it operated.* "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud" (cf. ch. vii. 2). It inspired them with awe, filled them with such fear as became sinful creatures in the presence of a holy and a jealous God (Exod. xl. 35; Lev. xvi. 2; Deut. iv. 24). Thus it symbolized the reverence that ought to characterise all who venture before him, whether in the public or private exercises of religion (Ps. xxxiii. 8; lxxxix.

7; Heb. xii. 28; 1 Pet. i. 17). Christ's disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration feared when they entered into the cloud (Luke ix. 34). Then it hindered their ministrations in the holy place. In this respect it served as an emblem of the dark dispensation under which they lived (2 Cor. iii. 13, 14), in comparison with which that of the New Testament is a dispensation of light, as well as of those obstructions arising from imperfect knowledge (1 Cor. xiii. 12) which still hamper the worship of believers in the heavenly places of the Christian Church.

Learn: 1. The importance of order in all things connected with religion (1 Cor. xiv. 40). 2. The settlement of religious ordinances in a country a true occasion of joy. 3. The high place assigned to music, vocal and instrumental, in Divine worship (Eph. v. 19). 4. The highest theme of praise for either Church or saint—the goodness and grace of God. 5. The true glory of land and people, of state and Church—the indwelling in both of the Divine glory (Ps. lxxxv. 9).—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

The first thirty-nine verses of this chapter (less the thirteenth) correspond very closely with the thirty-eight verses of the parallel that run 1 Kings viii. 12—50. For once also the two places are in closer accord in the original than might be augured from our English Version. Our thirteenth verse is not found in the parallel, and this fact, with the phenomenon of its presence here, will be considered under the verse when we reach it. The chapter consists of: *first*, Solomon's remarks addressed to his people (vers. 1—11); and *secondly*, the prayer and intercession he offers to God (vers. 14—42).

Ver. 1.—**In the thick darkness**; Hebrew, בָּעֲרָפֶל. The Lord had said this in so many words, and also by not a few practical examples (Lev. xvi. 2; Exod. xix. 9; xxiv. 16; xxv. 22; xl. 34, 35). This thing which he said, and did, even while really instructing, after the manner of special revelation, a specialized people, is essentially what he ever has said and ever is doing in all time, in all the world, and in all nature and providence. It is a fact and it is necessary that his glory be for the present veiled in "clouds and darkness" (Ps. xcvii. 2; xviii. 11).

Ver. 2.—Solomon's words now address themselves to God. **For ever.** These words refer rather to the permanence and stationariness of the temple as the dwelling-place of the ark, and the mercy-seat and cherubim, and all that symbolized and invited the Divine presence, than design any prophecy of length of time. They contrast with the wandering people, and wandering worship and sacrifices, and wandering tent and tabernacle with all their sacred contents (Ps. lxviii. 16; cxxxii. 14; 1 Chron. xxii. 10; xxviii. 6—8; 2 Sam. vii. 5—16).

Ver. 3.—Reading between the lines, this verse shows us that the face of Solomon had been turned to the symbol of God's presence, while he addressed to him the words of our second verse, since he now faces round to the assembly of the congregation. What words Solomon used in thus blessing the whole congregation are not given either here or in the parallel. The impression one takes is that the blessing was, in fact, wrapt up tacitly in all that Solomon recounts, when he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, etc. (ver. 4). However, it is not impossible that, with the variation of the tense in ver. 59, the verses of 1 Kings viii. 55—61 may contain the substance of it, if not itself.

Ver. 4.—(See 2 Sam. vii. 4—17; 1 Chron. xi. 2; xvii. 4—14.) **With his hands, . . . with his mouth.** Expressions like this, antithesis and all, remind how language formed itself in the concrete mould at first, from that, ever becoming more abstract as time grew. The ampler language of later date would be, **Who hath *indeed* fulfilled that which he spake.**

Ver. 5.—**I chose no city, . . . neither chose I any man.** The tabernacle and all it contained had but travelled from place to place, and rested at temporary halting-places; and from Moses' time all the leaders of the people Israel had been men in whom vested no permanent and no intrinsic authority (1 Sam. xvi. 1—13; 2 Sam. xxiv. 18—25).

Ver. 6.—(See again references of preceding verse, and 2 Sam. vii. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 70.)

Vers. 7—9.—(So 2 Sam. vii. 2, 10—16; 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10; xxviii. 2—7.)

Vers. 10, 11.—The moment that might have witnessed the utmost inflation of spiritual pride, the acme of ambition, the highest point of even moral kind of grandeur, being touched, is saved from the peril. To the "*performing of the Lord*" the glory is all given (Luke i. 54, 55, 68—72). Probably delivered from earthly feeling, and sheltered just now from self and human ambition, Solomon was in a very high degree "in the spirit" (Rev. i. 10) on this great day. The moment was a proud moment in Solomon's history, as well there may be proud moments in men's lives, but it was divinely shielded, as divinely inspired. Hereafter, for all that, "the thorn in the flesh" might become very necessary, lest Solomon "be exalted above measure" in the memory of all that had transpired.

Ver. 12.—**Before the altar.** This means to say that Solomon stood (and afterwards knelt down) *eastward* of the altar indeed, but with his face to the temple and congregation. Although the voice of Solomon was raised in prayer to God, yet the prayer was to be that of the whole congregation and not of priestly proxy, and therefore of the whole congregation it must be heard.

Ver. 13.—**A brazen scaffold.** The Hebrew word is כִּיּוֹר. The word occurs twenty-one times. It is translated, in the Authorized Version, "laver" eighteen times, once "pan" (1 Sam. ii. 14), once "hearth" (Zech. xii. 6), and once "scaffold," here. The meaning evidently is that the stand was in some sort basin-shaped.

Ver. 14.—**No God like thee, etc.** The quoting of Scripture and the utilizing of language in which the religious feeling of those who have gone before has expressed itself had plainly set in (Exod. xv. 11, 12; Deut. vii. 9). The prayer which this verse opens occupies twenty-eight verses; it is the longest prayer recorded in Scripture. It consists of two verses (14, 15) of opening; then follow three petitions—*first*, that God would perpetuate the line of David (ver. 16); *next*, that he would have regard to the place where his Name is put (vers. 17—20); and *thirdly*, that he would hear the prayers addressed to him toward this place (ver. 21). Of this last subject, seven different cases are propounded—*firstly*, the case of the man wronged by his neighbour (vers. 22, 23); *secondly*, of the people worsted by their enemies (vers. 24, 25); *thirdly*, of the people suffering from drought (vers. 26, 27); *fourthly*, of the people visited by death or special calamity (vers. 28—31); *fifthly*, of the stranger who comes to offer to pray (vers. 32, 33); *sixthly*, of the people going to war by God's permission (vers. 34, 35); *seventhly*, of the people in captivity (vers. 36—39). Then the prayer closes in vers. 40—42.

Ver. 16.—**There shall not fail thee, etc.** (so 2 Sam. vii. 12; 1 Kings ii. 4; vi. 12). **Yet so that thy children, etc.** (so Ps. cxxxii. 12).

Ver. 17.—**Let thy word be verified** (so 1 Chron. xvii. 9—13).

Ver. 18.—**Dwell with men** (Ps. cxxxii. 14). **Heaven and the heaven of heavens.** Solomon's conception of the *infinite* God comes plainly to view here (ch. ii. 6; Deut. x. 14; Ps. cxxxix. 5—12; cxlviii. 4; Isa. lxvi. 1; Acts vii. 4—9; xvii. 24).

Ver. 20.—**This house, . . . the place whereof, . . . this place** (so Exod. xxix. 43; Deut. xii. 5; xiv. 23; xv. 20; xvi. 2).

Ver. 21.—**The supplications of thy servant.** "The great thought of Solomon now is that the centre and core of all worship is prayer" (Professor Dr. James G. Murphy, in 'Handbook for Bible Classes: Chronicles'). **Toward this place** (see other instances of this expression, Ps. v. 7; xxviii. 2; cxxxviii. 2; Jonah ii. 4; Dan. vi. 10). **From thy dwelling-place.** 1 Kings viii. 30 has, "hear *to* thy dwelling-place, *to* heaven," by probably the mere error of a copyist.

Ver. 22.—**And an oath be laid upon him to make him swear.** This verse is explained by Exod. xxii. 9—11; Lev. vi. 1—5. The case of ordeal by self-purgation of oath is supposed. **And the oath come.** The Septuagint translates here, "and he come and declare by oath," etc.—a translation which a very slight alteration in the Hebrew, consisting in prefixing a *vau* to the word for swear, will allow. The Vulgate follows the Septuagint.

Ver. 23.—The prayer is that God will command his blessing on the oath ordeal.

Vers. 24, 25.—(See Lev. xxvi. 3, 17, 33, 40; Deut. xxvii. 7, 25; also iv. 27, 29—31; xxviii. 64—68; xxx. 1—5.)

Ver. 26.—**No rain** (see 1 Kings xvii. 1; Lev. xxvi. 19; Deut. xi. 17; xxviii. 23).

Ver. 27.—**When thou hast taught them;** rather, *when thou art guiding them to the right way.*

Vers. 28—31.—(See Lev. xxvi. 16—26; Deut. xxviii. 22—52, 59; ch. xx. 9.) **In the cities of their land.** This, to represent correctly the Hebrew, should read, *in the land of their gates.* Reference probably is being made to the fact that law and justice and judgment were administered "in the gate of the city" (Deut. xvi. 18; xxi. 19; Josh. xx. 4). **Thou only knowest** (so 1 Chron. xxviii. 9). **That they may fear thee** (so Ps. cxxx. 4). In the absence of a healthy fear is involved both the absence of a healing hopefulness, and too probably the presence of recklessness.

Vers. 32, 33.—**The stranger . . . come from a far country for thy great Name's sake.** These two verses, with every clause in them, must be felt most refreshing by every reader; but they ought also to be particularly observed, as both corrective of a common but strictly erroneous impression as to exclusiveness and a genius of bigotry inhering in the setting apart of the

Jewish race for a certain purpose in the Divine government and counsel, and also as revealing very significantly that that setting apart was *nothing but a method* and means to an end, as comprehensive and universal as the world itself. The analogies, in *fact*, in the world's history are linked, in one unbroken chain, to what sometimes seems to a mere reader of the Bible pages as an artificial and somewhat arbitrary decree or arrangement (see, amid many significant parallels, Exod. xxii. 21; Lev. xxv. 35; Numb. xv. 13—17; Deut. x. 19; xxxi. 12). **Not of thy people Israel** (John x. 16; xii. 20—26; Acts viii. 27). *For thy great Name's sake.* The insertion of the adjective "great" here (גָּדוֹל) is not Pentateuchal, but is found in Josh. vii. 9; in our parallel, 1 Kings viii. 42; Ps. lxxvi. 1; xcix. 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 23; Jer. x. 6; xliv. 26. **All people of the earth.** Not only are many of the psalms utterly in harmony with the spirit of this verse, but also the light of it is reflected brilliantly in such passages as Acts xvii. 22—31. **This house is called by thy Name**; literally, *thy Name is called upon* (or perhaps, *into*) *this house*, meaning that God himself is invoked there, or present there in order that he may be constantly invoked.

Vers. 34, 35.—The different supposition of these verses, compared with vers. 24, 25, is plain. Here we are reminded how right it is to implore a blessing before we go out to our allotted labour, or even on some specially and divinely appointed enterprise.

Vers. 36—39.—The matter of these verses is given fuller in the parallel (1 Kings viii. 46—53). The prayer is remarkable all the more as the last of the whole series, and one so sadly ominous! The *last* clause of ver. 36, carrying the expression far off, as the alternative of near, throws its lurid glare of unwelcome suggestion on all the rest. **No man which sinneth not.** The words need the summoning of no biblical parallels, for those are so numerous. But out of the rest emphasis may be placed at least on those furnished by Solomon himself—Prov. xx. 9; Eccles. vii. 21; both of which are particularly sententious. **Bethink themselves.** The words well express, in English idiom, the literal Hebrew, as in margin, "bring back to their heart" (Deut. xxx. 1—11). **Have sinned, . . . done amiss, . . . dealt wickedly** (so Ps. cvi. 6; Dan. ix. 5). The Authorized Version in the parallel (1 Kings viii. 47) is somewhat happier in its rendering of the three verbs employed here. It seems doubtful whether these have it in them to form a climax; more probably they speak of three different *directions* in wrong going. The parallel is well worthy of being referred to, in its vers. 50, 51.

Vers. 40—42.—These three verses are wanting in the parallel, which has kept us four verses (50—53) not shown here. Our two verses 41 and 42 are doubly interesting, *first*, as almost an exact copy of the words of David (Ps. cxxxii. 8—10); and *secondly*, as not an *entirely* exact copy, in some respects the form of *word* not being identical, though the signification is the same, and in other respects the clause being not identical, though still the meaning is essentially equal.

HOMILETICS

Vers. 1—42.—*The dedication, and Solomon's prayer.* The ark once within the most holy place, the whole temple seems to wait expectant for its own solemn offering and dedication, to that heaven from which its pattern came, to its own supreme Architect, of whose wisdom it was designed, and of whose inspiration of the mind and heart of so many, its beautiful and costly materials had been ungrudgingly given and skilfully wrought. The picture photographed so faithfully in this chapter does not fail of rivetting our gaze, but its points of view are very various, and we do not embrace them all by any means at one glance. We seem to hear also while we gaze. Now it is the broken snatch of a soliloquy that we seem to hear; now the unfeigned and adoring ascription, of blessing, and honour, and power, and of mercy's majesty, to the one Father of heaven and earth; now again the vast throng of worshippers, priests, princes, and people, is hushed in silence audible, on the knees of prayer. The royal typical son of David utters the solemn prepared service of prayer and supplication. The God, to whom none in heaven or on earth can be compared, is invoked, and the praise of his covenant-keeping and of his mercy and of his free promises is celebrated. These are made the ground, not indeed of any expostulation (for there was nothing in respect of which to expostulate), but rather of earnest pleading, that what seemed sometimes too great, too good to be true on the earth, might nevertheless be "verified," "in very deed with men upon the earth;" and then the measured sevenfold prayer begins. It cannot but be that in this service of dedication, followed upon so promptly with Heaven's own acceptance and most graciously vouchsafed consecration, there should be manifest lessons, or possibly more recondite principles of ever-enduring application and value. Let us, then, observe from this whole service of dedication the following suggestions.

I. How the ineffable Nature permits itself to be represented, as having local habitation on earth. If that infinite, spiritual Nature or Being did of old neither preclude the possibility nor prohibit the imagination of such a thing, there can be no intrinsic reason why it should not be so now and for all time. We must not suppose that certain well-known and sublime passages in New Testament Scripture outruled this. But, on the contrary, they acknowledge it rather, and are only anxious to do so to the extent of universalizing it. The place of this worship is, indeed, *wherever the worshipper himself is;* and not *only* in Jerusalem, nor *only* "in this mountain," but where Jacob stretched himself, when his head was pillowed on the stones, and waking he exclaimed, "This is the house of God;" or in the dungeon; or in the windowless, chimneyless, mud-built croft; or in the chamber's solitude; or in the palace, the church, or cathedral, all-gorgeous with arch and pavement, height and length, music and painting. In fact, God's condescending grace gives what the nature of man, once also itself given of him, constantly and everywhere either postulates as of course, or craves with stimulated spiritual force. There is scarcely anything that sits closer to our, not mere outer but innermost nature, than that law which binds us *by association*, and by the associations *of place* in particular. There is no reason why we should disown it, or be ashamed of it, or slight it, or try at any time to rid ourselves of it by force. The reasons lie rather to the contrary, if only we cherish the sacred associations and discourage the reverse. It is not when our sense of God as a Presence in a place is nearest, that we *least* feel that he still "dwells," to be wondered at and adored, "in the thick darkness," or that we least "fear because of him." The acts of worship, no doubt legitimate *everywhere*, are helped there, and to cherish that help is wise.

II. The essential, or natural and most desirable requirements of such a dedication—the dedication of a place for the worship and service of God. They are such as these: 1. *The presence of the people, or of a representative gathering of them, in a prepared and quickened state of mind,* of whom in part and for whom the occasion of the dedication arises. The people were certainly present on this occasion. They are already in a very quickened state of mind, which is greatly added to when their leader faces them, and in the act, as it is here called, of "blessing them," summons them to take an earnest and intelligent part in the impending ceremony. 2. *A rehearsal, in the nature of a preamble, of the circumstances which had led up to the present work*—the human side of them, the Divine side of them, the motives which had been at work in them, the promise and providence of God, and the gratitude due to him for them. 3. *Prayer uttered by one, offered by all, acknowledging the sole Godhead, without comparison in heaven and earth, magnifying his infinite condescension, reposing entire confidence upon his supporting and encouraging goodness;* with imploring petitions that an ear may be opened to the special prayers now waiting to be offered, and a gracious eye bent down upon the place and the scene now outstretched before heaven. Special note may be made under vers. 19—21 of the three points: (1) of the earnestness of the prayer that *prayer* may be heard; (2) that it may be heard by witness of this very memorial house on earth, unto which Divine and emphatic promise had been made; and (3) that *forgiveness* (ver. 21) may be the first part of answer to *every and all* prayer. What an amazing depth of significant import underlies this one fact, and how entirely it is in harmony with all Scriptures' setting forth of the position of human nature in the presence of God!

III. The sevenfold petition of the service. Whatever these petitions are, they speak distinctly the apprehensions—and those from a religious point of view—which the king and leader of the nation had in respect of that nation. The circumstances of the position compel us to regard them as a correct and faithful reflection or transcript (from the inner thoughts of Solomon and those who co-operated with him in the composition) of those perils to national well-being which might sadly ripen as time went on. It is evident that the estimate formed of these perils was such, and of such significance, that to deprecate them most importunately absorbs the larger part of the whole prayer. The petitions are manifestly more what concern the outer life, for the most part, than the inner thought of the people; the providence of Heaven, than their own work and doing. But, for that very reason, they bind together so much more indissolubly the welfare of a people's outer life and the Divine favour. They illustrate forcibly the dependence of the former on the latter. They remind us how this was at one time the *chief* way, probably at *all* time a necessary and leading way (as bodily pain is for the individual), to teach the fear of God and not less the fullest love of him. The seven petitions may be enumerated, as: 1. That relating to what may be designated as the ordeal-altar-oath. 2. That relating to the condition of those who at any time might be taken captive in war—an event only supposable on the assumption of the people "having sinned against" God. 3. That relating to the visitation of drought, as punishment in the same way of sin. 4. That relating to dearth, pestilence, blasting, mildew, locusts or caterpillars, siege, sore or sickness of what sort soever, as in the same way punishment of sin. 5. That relating to the stranger—a petition surely charged with significance and sweet compassion, and most prophetic in its character. 6. That relating to absence from their home and their land, and the holy city of their solemnities, through the enterprise of just and divinely sanctioned war, where no case of capture by the enemy is contemplated. 7. And lastly, that by fearful omen relating to the possibility of the sin of the people having reached such a pitch, that their punishment should consist in a general captivity, and exportation to a foreign land "far off or near." And it is the supplication of Solomon, and the vast Church there assembled before the temple, with its most holy place and ark, with its brazen sea, lavers, and altar, that, when under any of these cases "*confession*" has been made, "*repentance*" has been approved, and prayer for "*forgiveness*" has been importuned, while the worshipper turns his thought, his faith, his hope, towards the temple, and its adorable indwelling Majesty, that confession may be heard, that repentance may be accepted, and that prayer be answered to by healing and restoring mercy. The one collective result left on our mind is that the structure of civil and national society, so infinitely complex, dependent on so many individuals, the likely victim of such an unlimited variety of influences and motives, good, bad, and most vague and inconclusive, needs nothing short of the wisdom and compassion, the justice and the tenderness, of the infinite God.

IV. THE FINAL INVOCATION—ALL GATHERED INTO ONE—THAT THE LORD GOD WOULD, ACCEPTING THE DEDICATION, PERFORM THE VERY CONSECRATION ITSELF. Amid the seven distinct appeals of entreaty (contained in our vers. 40—42), instinct with highly elevated energy, and six of which may be said to be rather of the nature of material helps of faith and imagination of spiritual realities, how clear we may count it that the absolute grasp of spiritual truth, and apprehension of the spiritual Being, were not strange to Solomon and the true Israelite of the elder dispensation! What a real exertion of such power, gift, grace, is told by *the central* invocation, to which all the rest are but the setting, viz. "Now therefore arise, *O Lord God*, into thy resting-place, *thou*"! The *open eyes*, the *attent ears*, the uttered sound of *prayer*, the sight of the *place*, the *ark*, the *priests*, the *saints*, the *face of the anointed*, the memory of the *mercies of David*,—these, these all are but the surroundings and aids to *the grand effort*, the effort of Solomon and his people, to which they address themselves, and, we may believe, successfully rose, at the one commanding climax of the whole pomp, ceremony, and most really religious service—*this*, that effort—to have, to know, to believe in, *the Lord God*, the *Thou* (as Solomon, addressing him, says), as the *Indwelling, effective Presence*, and *Glory* of the place.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*God, the incomprehensible One.* What is the historical reference? Is it to the luminous cloud that shone between the cherubim? or is it not, rather, to the Divine manifestation on Mount Sinai, of which God had said, "I will come unto thee in a thick cloud" (Exod. xix. 9)? God "dwells in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. vi. 16), and this is the same thing; for the dazzling light is to us as the darkness. As our eye is constituted to receive no more than a certain degree of light, so our mind is created to receive no more than a measure of truth. And this is markedly and manifestly true of our knowledge of God. He is the incomprehensible One, whom we "cannot find out," whose "ways are unsearchable." This is true of—

I. THE DIVINE NATURE. Of his eternity, of his infinity, of his sovereignty, and of his omniscience, taken in connection with our human liberty, how little can we comprehend! how soon do we find ourselves beyond our depth, involved in difficulties which are hopelessly insoluble!

II. HIS REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN JESUS CHRIST. "His rich, his free redemption" is, as has been said or sung, "dark through brightness." Jesus Christ is distinctly and pre-eminently *the* Revelation of God to man. Yet is there in the connection of his Sonship of God with his Sonship of man a mystery which baffles us. How One equipped with Divine power and wisdom as was Jesus the Christ could "grow in wisdom" as well as in stature, is dark and impenetrable to our understanding.

III. HIS RULING OF OUR RACE. Why did God allow forty centuries of sin and strife, of superstition and sorrow, of darkness and death, to pass away before he sent his Son into the world to be its Light, and to redeem it from its ruin?

IV. HIS DIRECTION OF OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES. How is it, we wonder, that God allows certain things to happen which (as it seems to us) are certain to be so injurious in their effects? how is it that he does not act in a way which would (as we are convinced) be fraught with so much blessing? Events in the lives of others or in our own lives are often so different from, so contrary to, what we should expect at the hand of One who rules in wisdom, in faithfulness, in love. Consider: 1. *How inevitable it is* that this should be so. The feeble-minded and uncultured man completely fails to understand his gifted and educated brother; the little child completely misunderstands his father; nay, he thinks his father unwise, unjust, or unkind in those very things in which that father *knows* himself to be most wise, most just, most kind. And what is the difference which separates human ignorance from human wisdom when compared with that which separates us from God? 2. We may reasonably hope that this will *gradually lessen, though they can never disappear.* As we pass on in life, we understand more of God's character and his ways. When we shall receive that glorious enlargement of spiritual faculty for which we look and long, we shall know God as the best and wisest do not know him here. But we rejoice to think that, in the remotest future to which our imagination can look forward, we shall still be inquiring and gaining knowledge of our heavenly Father. 3. How much we know now that is *of the greatest practical value.* We know that God is One who is a Spirit even as we are, but sinless and Divine; that he is perfectly holy, wise, faithful, kind; that he is accessible to our prayer, and is not only ready but eager to receive us again into his favour; that he is a Father who is tenderly interested in *all* his children, and who responds to the filial love and obedience of those who seek to serve him; that he is pleased with an endeavour to do and bear his will; that he is seeking and outworking our spiritual, our eternal well-being. This is enough for the highest ends of our existence, for the restoration of our soul, for the ennoblement of our character.—C.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The worth of a wish—the estimate of Christ.* "David did well in that it was in his heart" to build a house for the Lord. The purpose of his heart, though it "lost the name of action," was acceptable to the God he served. Almost everything, in the estimate of him who "trieth the reins and the heart," depends on the motives by which we are inspired. Hence we may speak of—

I. THE WORTHLESSNESS OF SOLOMON'S EXECUTION *apart from the excellency of his motive.* That building now complete (at the time of the text) was very grand, very costly, very beautiful; it was very elaborate in its workmanship; it was very complete in all its parts; it lacked nothing that treasure and time, that skill and strength, could furnish. But, supposing that Solomon had done everything with the one desire to signalize his reign over Israel, his execution would have counted for much among men, but it would have weighed nothing at all with God. It would not have advanced him by one step in the favour of the Most High. We need not, however, think that Solomon was devoid of a sincere desire to magnify Jehovah's Name. He said that he had "built the house *for the Name of the Lord God* of Israel" (ver. 10); and this prayer of dedication, adopted if not composed by him, is indicative of a reverent as well as a patriotic spirit (see 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3).

II. THE WORTH OF A TRUE AND PURE DESIRE. God was pleased with David that he *wished* to build him a house; he "did well in that it was in his heart." 1. It is our *motive* that makes our action to be *our own.* Another may command our speech or our action, our tongue or our hand; but we are masters of our own thoughts; our desires and purposes are our own. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (see Mark vii. 21, 22; Matt. xxvi. 12, 41). 2. There is an ascending scale in our motives, reaching from the very low to the very high. Men may have enough of the Satanic in them to be actuated in their conduct by absolute vindictiveness or even a positive delight in the misery and ruin of their neighbours; at the other end of the scale they may have enough of the Divine in them to be inspired by pure magnanimity, by a wish to befriend those who have done them injury (Matt. v. 45). Very high up in this scale stands the motive of desiring the glory of God, longing for the coming of the kingdom of Christ, an earnest wish to do something for his exaltation. And though the voice may be too feeble to speak any words that men may care to listen to, though the hand may be too weak to strike any blow that will shake the walls of iniquity, yet the very wish to do something for Christ, the prayer, "Make use of me, my God," weighs much in the balances of Heaven. It may be a pure desire to give of our substance to the needy, or to go forth to comfort some stricken heart, or to take a class in a ragged or a Sunday school, or to enter the ranks of the Christian ministry, or to do work in the foreign field. In Christian homes, in every land, there are hearts that sincerely and even ardently desire to serve their Saviour and to be a blessing to their brethren; but there intervenes some forbidding word of God, some frustrating providence of his. The purse is emptied, or health fails, or home duties suddenly assume a new form or take much larger proportions; and God says, "This is not for thee." But the desire is accepted; the purpose of the soul is taken for the deed; it is chronicled in the books of Heaven, "Thou didst well in that it was in thine heart."

III. ITS EFFECTIVE VALUE. When the pure desire of the true heart is not granted, it does not follow that it is without effect. Certainly it was not so in David's case. This desire of his heart, expressed to God but not granted by him, had very much to do with the ultimate result. It led to the Divine permission and direction extended to Solomon; it led to Solomon's personal aspiration and resolution; it led to the preparation and storage of many valuable materials. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the temple was the work of David as much as of his son; for he who originates the idea and inspires the people with his thought is as effective an agent as he who executes it. And many, since then, in the kingdom of Christ have succeeded where they seemed to fail; many a lonely and, apparently, unblessed worker for his Master, both at home and abroad; both in the haunts and slums of some great city here, or in the depths of India, or in the heart of Africa, or in the midst of the idolatry and iniquity of China, or amid some island population;—many such have gone home with no reward in their hand, unable to point to the gathered fruits of their toil and patience; and yet their unaccomplished efforts have been a precious and powerful inspiration, moved by which others have followed in their track, like Solomon in David's, and have built the edifice, have wrought the work, in the Name and in the strength of God. The finished work is, in some real sense and perhaps even in a large degree, the fruit of the good thought "in the heart" of him whom no one regards as its author. We do more than we know when we think and feel in the spirit of our Lord.—C.

Vers. 12—14.—*Spiritual attitude.* We have in these three verses four references to *attitude.* Solomon "stood before the altar;" he "spread forth his hands;" he "kneeled down upon his knees;" he spoke of those who "walk before God." Now, it is worth while to observe that—

I. BODILY ATTITUDE IS NOT WITHOUT ITS VALUE. In the gospel of Christ, with all its precious and glorious spiritual freedom, there are no regulations as to posture in prayer: it is in no particular position of body that we must draw nigh to God and have fellowship with him. The sufferer on his couch, the workman at his post, is as free to converse with God as the minister in the church. We glory in this divinely bestowed liberty. But it is wise to remember that one bodily attitude may be more closely associated with prayer than all others are, and, being thus associated in our minds, we *in that attitude* more readily fall into, and more successfully maintain ourselves in, the spirit of devotion than we can in any other. The body is the servant of the mind, and we may compel it to serve us thus; by constantly suggesting to us and thus favouring in us the *idea* and the *spirit* of worship. Here, as everywhere, is action and reaction. Our heart prompts us to worship, and this devout desire leads us to assume the attitude of devotion; then the bodily attitude helps, in its way and measure, to sustain the spirit in its reverential mood.

II. Overt acts are important. 1. Attendance at the place of worship: "standing before the altar." 2. Recognizing sacred obligations publicly; doing the right thing "in the presence of all the congregation." 3. Using right and true words, not only concerning God (as in ver. 14), but concerning man. 4. Acting, "walking," in honesty, in purity, in sobriety, in rectitude, in all relations. But, most important of all, because at the root of all—

III. Spiritual attitude is of the first consideration. What is the attitude of our soul toward God, toward the Lord Jesus Christ? We cannot propose to ourselves a more radical, a more vital question. The answer decides our position in (or towards) the kingdom of God. If our spiritual attitude is that of enmity, aversion, indifference, then, whatever our overt actions may be, or whatever our professions may be, we stand outside that kingdom, and are in danger of hearing the words, "I never knew you." But if our attitude is not this, but rather one of hope and trust, if it be one of desire to understand and please God, if it be one of honest and earnest inquiry, then, though there be many imperfections in our behaviour, and though there be much to be learned and acquired, we are right in the sight of God, and are counted among his servants and his friends. It was the spiritual attitude of Mary when she came with her precious spikenard which drew the Saviour's commendation; it was the attitude of penitence and faith which called forth his gracious assurance to the poor malefactor by his side. As Christian men, it concerns us much that our spiritual attitude is one of (1) reverence; (2) of prayerfulness; (3) of loving service; (4) of concern for the coming of his kingdom.—C.

Vers. 18—21.—*God in the sanctuary.* These elevated and eloquent words suggest to us what is—

I. A false thought of God in relation to the sanctuary. It may be, and probably is, imagined by the idolatrous that the temple of their deity *contains* the object of their worship; that it is his residence and home; that it suffices for him. Solomon had no such false thought about Jehovah; he knew that "the heaven of heavens could not contain him," and "how much less the house that he had built!" God's presence is not to be limited in our thought in any way whatever. He is "within no walls confined," and if we so habituate our mind to think of him as being present in some sacred place *as he is not elsewhere*, we "limit the Holy One" as we should not do. The only difference in the presence of the Eternal and Infinite One can be in our thought and to our imagination.

II. The true thought of him in that relation. As those who worship God in the sanctuary, we should accustom our minds to think of him as: 1. *The very present One.* "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" In very deed and in truth. Not only is his presence everywhere, and therefore within any walls that may be erected in his honour, but he is actively present there, interested in all that is passing there; "his eyes open . . . day and night" to observe all that is there done before him. The prevailing thought of those who "go up to the house of the Lord" should be that they are about to meet God, to stand and to bow before him; to address him even as they address their neighbour, only with deepest reverence and in lowliest homage of heart. The commanding and restraining thought, the penetrating, soul-pervading thought of those who occupy the sanctuary, should be that of Israel at Bethel, "Surely God is in this place." 2. *One who is waiting to be worshipped.* Solomon earnestly and repeatedly desires of Jehovah that he would "hear his servant(s)," that he would "hear their prayers." If only we are engaged in really reverential worship, we have no need to doubt this. God is not only "to be entreated" of us; he is always to be found of all who truly seek him. Nay, *he seeks us* as his worshippers. "The Father seeketh such to worship him" (John iv. 23), *i.e.* such as worship him in spirit. All they, therefore, who draw nigh to God with a pure desire to render to him the homage and the gratitude of their heart, to renew before him their vows of loving attachment and holy service, to ask of him his Divine guidance and enrichment, may make quite sure that they "do not seek his face in vain." 3. *One who is ready to forgive.* "When thou hearest, forgive." We should meet continually with God under a blessed sense of sonship, as those "whose transgressions have been forgiven," and who are as children at home with their Father, as redeemed ones with their Saviour. This is the true basis of communion with God. But, even then and thus, it becomes us to bethink ourselves that our service is not untainted with imperfection; near to our lips should be the recurring prayer. "And when thou hearest, forgive." Humility is not disowned by the more advanced graces of trustfulness, love, joy in God.—C.

Vers. 22—23.—*Divine justice.* This petition supposes—

I. THE COMMISSION OF DELIBERATE WRONG by one man against another. A dispute may readily arise in which each man, affected in his judgment by his own personal interests, believes himself to make a righteous claim. This is a case for impartial intervention, for the decision of one who is not prejudiced by any interest of his own. But the case here referred to by Solomon is one of deliberate wrong perpetrated by one man against his neighbour. It is a painful thing that this should have to be presupposed among the "people of God." Yet it was so. Enlightenment was not, and it is not, any positive guarantee against actual unrighteousness. A man may know all he can learn of Christ, sitting constantly and reverentially at his feet, and yet he may allow himself to do that which defrauds his brother and does him cruel and shameful wrong. Saddening observation only too frequently and only too powerfully attests it.

II. THE APPEAL TO GOD. The injured Hebrew made his appeal to the Lord his God; he required the offending neighbour to take an oath in the very presence of the Holy One, invoking the judgment of God against the one who was in the wrong. It was presumably a last resort, an ultimate appeal. Not formally, but substantially, we do likewise. If human judgment fails, we leave the guilty in the hands of God. We commit our righteous cause to his Divine arbitration. We ask God to make our innocence appear, to restore to us the good name or the possession of which we have been defrauded. We make our appeal from earth to Heaven.

III. THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. Solomon prayed God to intervene so that the wicked should be recompensed and the righteous justified. Under that dispensation he might rightly and even confidently make that request. But what may we expect now of the Divine justice? These three things: 1. That the righteous laws of God are always working for the overthrow of evil and the enthronement of integrity; the former is radically weak, and the latter is essentially strong and prevailing. 2. That unvisited evil is always attended with spiritual failure, while unrewarded rectitude is always accompanied and sustained by spiritual worth. 3. That there is a long future which holds ample compensations in its unsounded depths. Divine justice will prove to be completely vindicated when we have *looked deep* enough and *waited long* enough.—C.

Vers. 24—28, 34, 35.—*God and the nation.* Solomon takes his place and his part on this great occasion as the sovereign of the nation; he prays *for* the people of the land in the double sense of representing them and of interceding for them. It is the Hebrew nation that was then "before God," and is now before us. We therefore think of—

I. NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY. That is assumed throughout. It is not stated in so many words, but the idea of it pervades the whole prayer. The people of Israel were not at liberty to choose their own deity, nor their own ecclesiastical polity, nor even their own forms of worship; nor might they determine how they should be related to one another. In all the important relationships in which they stood, of every kind, they owed a direct obedience to God. And this rested upon the bases of—

II. NATIONAL INHERITANCE. Their land was that which God had "given his people for an inheritance" (ver. 27). So very distinctly and remarkably had God bestowed their land upon them, that they might well realize their national obligation. But when we take all things into account, we shall see that every nation owes all that it has and is to the creative, formative, providential goodness of Almighty God; and it is, therefore, responsible to him for its creed, its religious worship, its laws and statutes, its habits of life; for there is no nation anywhere that has not derived its inheritance from him. Even that which may, at first sight, seem to disconnect it from him, viz. the element of national courage, energy, industry, struggle, suffering,—this also is "of the Lord."

III. NATIONAL ACTIVITY. Solomon prayed (ver. 34) that, when God's people "went out to war," their prayers for victory might be heard, and that God would "maintain their cause." He could offer this supplication with a perfectly clear conscience. Neither as a spirit nor as a sentiment, much less as a religious conviction, had *peace* entered into the minds of men as it has now. *He* had not been born who came to be the Prince of peace, and whose advent was to be the beginning of the era of "peace on earth." War was then regarded as a rightful, honourable, commendable activity—a field of enterprise and capacity which any one might desire to enter. There may still be found a place for it, as a sad and deplorable necessity. Under the sway of Jesus Christ, it can hold no larger or higher position among national activities than that. But as it was right that prayer should be offered for God's blessing on national wars, more certainly is it right that his Divine blessing should be continually sought on all peaceful industries; that is to say, on all those peaceful industries which make for the comfort, the enrichment, the well-being of the world. There are activities on which the pure or kind heart must shrink from invoking the blessing of God. And what we cannot conscientiously ask him to bless we should refuse to promote or to entertain. Surely, however, it is a very large part of national piety that prayer should be made continually, in the church and in the home, that, in every path of honourable and estimable industry, the people of the land may walk before God, and fulfil in this respect his holy will; that they may also receive his sanction and his blessing.

IV. NATIONAL MISFORTUNE. (Vers. 24, 26—28.) Solomon anticipates the hour of national misfortune—defeat in battle, drought, pestilence, locusts, etc. He regards this conceivable calamity as the consequence of national sin and the sign of Divine displeasure (vers. 24, 26), "because they have sinned against thee," and he prays for mercy and for the removal of the stroke of penalty. It is a question of great importance whether this view is to be taken under all circumstances whatever. We must remember that the way in which the favour of God was manifested in Old Testament times was the way of temporal prosperity, and (conversely) the form of Divine disapproval was that of temporal adversity. But we are living in a period when the spiritual and the future are the prevailing elements: and what was a certain conclusion then may be only a possibility or a probability now. 1. It may be true that national calamity speaks of *national delinquency*, and calls for national repentance. It is not only possible, but even probable, that this is the case. For national sin is commonly showing itself in guilty indulgence, and that leads to weakness, to exposure to the enemy, to misfortune of many kinds. 2. It may be that national calamity is *Divine discipline*. It is quite possible that God is testing, is purifying, is refining the nation as he does the individual, is intervening to save it from sin and shame, is working thus for its moral elevation and enlargement. And therefore it may be that the question to be asked is—What have we to learn? what is the peril to be shunned? which is the way God desires should be taken?—C.

Vers. 29—31.—*God and the individual soul.* Not only during the time of national calamity (ver. 28), though especially then, do families and individual men find themselves in sore need of Divine succour. There is never any considerable congregation which does not include at least a few hearts that come up in hope of comfort and relief from Heaven.

I. THE BURDEN WHICH IS BORNE BY EACH HUMAN HEART. With our complex nature, and our many human relationships, we lie open to many ills and sorrows. These may be: 1. *Bodily;* pain or weakness, or threatened serious disease. 2. *Temporal;* some difficulty or danger connected with "our circumstances." 3. *Sympathetic;* some trouble of heart we are suffering by reason of our strong attachment to others who suffer and are in distress. 4. *Spiritual;* heart-ache, disappointment, compunction, doubt, anxious inquiry after God. "Every one knows his own sore and his own grief."

II. THE APPEAL OF THE SOUL TO THE SUPREME. Trouble does lead men to the God of their life, to the Father of their spirit. "Men say, 'God be pitiful,' who ne'er said, 'God be praised.'" We cannot supply our own need; we find our own "insufficiency for ourselves;" we must look beyond ourselves, and in what direction? *Man often fails us.* 1. We cannot speak to him, either because we cannot get his ear, or because we do not care to divulge our secret grief to any human heart whatsoever. 2. Or we have tried to secure human sympathy, and have failed; men are too much occupied with their own affairs and their own troubles to make much room in their hearts for ours. 3. Or we cannot discover the human hand that will help us; those that pity cannot serve us, cannot save us. *We must have recourse to God.* And we bring our grief, our sore, to him. 1. We are sure that he is accessible. He invites our approach; he says, "Call upon me in the time of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." 2. We are sure of his attention. He is our Father, who pities us with parental kindness (Ps. ciii. 13); he is our Saviour, who has trodden the path of struggle and of sorrow before us, on whose tender sympathy we may confidently count (Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15, 16; v. 2). 3. We may depend on his power. He is able to save, to rescue, to restore, to renew.

III. THE DIVINE RESPONSE. 1. It is a question of *our spiritual integrity.* God answers "according to *all our ways;*" that is, according to our integrity. We must have the spirit of obedience in us. We may not look for a response if we are "regarding iniquity in our heart;" but, on the other hand, if we are seriously bent on serving the Lord, if "our heart condemn us not," if it acquit us of all insincerity and double-mindedness, "then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments" (1 John iii. 21, 22). We may not, we are not able to keep *all* his precepts in all particulars; but the spirit of filial obedience, the desire to do what is "pleasing in his sight," is dwelling within us and inspiring us, and we are, therefore, of those whose prayer he hears. He forgives our shortcoming ("hear . . . and forgive"), and he "renders according to our ways." 2. It is a question of *Divine knowledge.* Who shall tell that this spirit of submission and obedience is within us? Only One can; it is he who "only knows the hearts of the children of men." He looks beneath our words and actions, and sees the motives and the purposes of our hearts. 3. It is a question of *our character and the Divine intention.* And God's design is so to hear and heed our prayers, so to grant or to withhold the desires of our heart, that we shall "fear God and walk in his ways," shall be "partakers of his holiness."—C.

Vers. 36—39.—*Departure and return.* It seems a melancholy thing that, at this hour of sacred joy and triumph, Solomon should have been under the necessity of contemplating national unfaithfulness, Divine displeasure, a return of the people of God to ignominious captivity and all its consequent distress. But he felt that it was necessary, and the issue abundantly justified his forecast.

I. DEPARTURE FROM GOD. In the case of Israel, departure from the Lord their God meant either (1) the formal substitution of another deity for Jehovah, or (2) wide-spread disobedience to his Law, moral or ceremonial, or both. With ourselves it signifies one or more of three things. 1. A growing disregard, ending in an absolute indifference, or even denial, of God's claims. 2. A serious and, in the end, a shameful violation of his moral Law; doing that which is grievous in his sight and injurious to ourselves and our neighbours. 3. Gradual but growing declension after acquaintance with God; the heart allowing itself to become loosened from sacred ties and attaching itself to other objects—separating itself from him and quitting his service.

II. ITS PENALTY. 1. *Divine displeasure.* "Thou be angry with them." A most serious and most deplorable thing it is to abide beneath the displeasure of our heavenly Father. The anger of love, the righteous anger of holy love, is ill to bear, indeed; it is a heavy weight upon the heart; it is a darkening of the life of man. 2. *The triumph of our enemy.* "And deliver them over before their enemies," etc. A sad thing it is for the human soul to be at the mercy of its enemy. Sin is a cruel enemy, and exacts a full penalty. (1) How it *robs us* of our true treasure—of our joy in God, of our gladness in his service, of our likeness to him, of the friendship of Jesus Christ, of the hope of eternal life! (2) How it *smites* us—with inward compunction, with a sense of our guiltiness and folly, with humiliation at our low estate! (3) How it *degrades* us—bringing us down into captivity, so that we are no longer masters of ourselves, but are at the mercy of any tyrannous habit we may have contracted! We are in the land of the enemy; his bonds are upon our soul.

III. OUR REPENTANCE AND RETURN. 1. Distress leads to thoughtfulness. "They bethink themselves." We "come to ourselves" (Luke xv. 17), as those who were created to consider and act reasonably; we weigh our condition and our prospects. 2. Thoughtfulness leads to self-rebuke. We reprove ourselves for *our folly*. We compare or contrast the present with the past, the land whither we have been "carried away captive" with the home of freedom and of sacred joy. We reproach ourselves with *our guilt*. We are pained and ashamed that we have left him, who is worthy of the riches of our strength, for all that is unworthy; him, to whom we owe everything, for that or for those to whom we owe nothing. We repent of our decision and our deed. 3. Repentance leads to return. We return unto God "with all our heart and with all our soul." We come *with confession*; we say freely and sincerely, "We have sinned" (ver. 38). We come *with consecration*; we offer ourselves, our hearts and lives, unto God, that henceforth we may walk in his ways with a perfect heart. We come *in faith*; we have hope in his mercy, for we know what will be—

IV. HIS RECEPTION OF US. He will "forgive his people that have sinned against him" (ver. 39). He will cordially welcome; he will immediately and magnanimously restore (see Luke xv. 20—24).—C.

Vers. 1—11.—*The dedication of the temple: 2. The address of Solomon.* I. TO JEHOVAH. (Vers. 1, 2.) On beholding the cloud which filled the temple (ver. 13), Solomon uttered words which expressed: 1. *Recognition of Jehovah's presence.* "The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness." Though nowhere occurring in Old Testament Scripture, this promise accorded substantially with the declarations Jehovah had often made (Exod. xiii. 21; xvi. 9; xix. 9; xx. 21; xxiv. 16; Lev. xvi. 2; Numb. xii. 5; Deut. xxxi. 15). In speaking as he did, Solomon both intimated his faith in the Divine promise, and his belief that in the cloud which filled the temple that promise had been implemented; in the thick darkness he recognized the dwelling-place of God. 2. *Belief in Jehovah's acceptance of the temple.* The phenomenon looked upon must have called to his mind the similar occurrence on the completion of the tabernacle, and led him to interpret this as Moses did that, as an intimation that Jehovah was pleased to accept the finished structure, and designed to make of it not simply "a lodging for a wayfaring man," but "a house of habitation," and "a place of dwelling for ever." 3. *Welcome of Jehovah to his house.* Addressing himself directly to Jehovah, the king in effect says, "Lord, I have built a house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever; and now that thou hast graciously condescended to come to us, according to thy promise, in 'a thick cloud,' in the name of thy people I give thee joyous welcome, and humbly invite thee to enter and take possession." 4. *A sense of the honour done by Jehovah to himself and his people in permitting them to build him a permanent habitation in their midst.* It is hardly doubtful that Solomon at the moment realized the antithesis expressed by the words "I" and "thee"—"*I*, a sinful as well as puny creature, have built for *thee*, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, a house of habitation. Who am I, O Lord, that thou shouldest set such honour upon me?" Similar emotions rise in gracious souls at the thought of God taking up abode within them (Ps. viii. 4; cxliv. 3; Luke vii. 6), or accepting the work of their hands (1 Chron. xxix. 14; 2 Cor. ii. 14).

II. TO THE PEOPLE. (Vers. 3—11.) Facing round upon the congregation, which at a signal rose to its feet, the pious monarch (probably with uplifted hands) supplicated for his subjects the Divine blessing, and in their hearing rendered thanks to God for the work that day finished. In particular, he acknowledged that the temple had been built by Jehovah: 1. *Rather than by him, Solomon.* Noteworthy is the emphasis laid upon the fact that "the Lord God of Israel had with his hands fulfilled that which he had spoken with his mouth." *Qui facit per alium facit per se.* Solomon esteemed himself the builder of the temple (ver. 10), though not a beam of timber had been felled, or a stone quarried, or a pillar cast, or a knop fashioned by himself, but all had been executed at and in accordance with his instructions by workmen and artisans; and in like manner he regarded Jehovah as the prime Architect, inasmuch as without Jehovah's permission the work had never been begun, and without Jehovah's aid it had never been finished (Ps. cxxvii. 1). 2. *As a mark of special favour to Jerusalem.* "In all places where I record my Name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee," had Jehovah said upon the mount (Exod. xx. 24), while Moses on the plains of Moab had reminded them that "unto the place which the Lord their God should choose out of all their tribes to put his Name there, even unto his habitation should they seek, and thither should they bring their offerings" (Deut. xii. 5); yet never since the day of their departure from Egypt had a city been selected for such a purpose, until David had arisen to be the captain of his people and Jerusalem had become the metropolis of the land. Then Jerusalem was chosen (Ps. cxxxii. 13), and the ark of God established on Zion (2 Sam. vi. 12; 1 Chron. xv. 1, etc.); now, in further pursuance of this plan to specially distinguish the capital, a house had been built to set his Name there. 3. *In fulfilment of a promise made to David his father.* The first effect of the ark's establishment upon Mount Zion was to excite within David's heart a desire to erect a structure worthy of its accommodation (2 Sam. vii. 2); a house of cedar instead of the goat's-hair tent in which it had hitherto been lodged. The design was approved by Jehovah in so far as it bespoke the deeply religious spirit of his servant, the fervour of his gratitude, and the sincerity of his devotion. Nevertheless, the proposal that David should build the house was not favoured by Jehovah—rather was expressly negatived. David having been a man of war, and, having shed much blood upon the earth in God's sight, it was hardly congruous that he should build a temple to the God of peace (1 Chron. xxii. 8). Thus God intimates that in religion, as in ordinary affairs, is a "fitness of things" which cannot be transgressed without a shock to beholders. If in any department of life, much more in that of religion, a beautiful consistency should be maintained between one's public conduct and private character, and a strict watch set upon one's present actions lest they should hinder future usefulness. But if David should not build the house, a son of his, to be afterwards born, would (2 Sam. vii. 12, 13; 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10); and he, Solomon, had arisen in fulfilment of that promise. 4. *For the honour of his Name.* So far as Solomon was concerned, that indicated true humility. Different from Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30), Solomon had no thought of enhancing his own glory in what he undertook and executed, though, as the sequel proved, he thereby the more effectually secured that (ch. ix. 23; 1 Kings x. 23, 24; cf. Luke xiv. 11). Of genuine religion also was it a sign, God's glory being ever to a good man the foremost motive and highest aim in all his actions (1 Cor. x. 31), the uppermost desire in his heart being to sing forth the honour of God's Name (Ps. lxvi. 2), and to speak of his glory (Ps. xxix. 9). On the part of Jehovah the end contemplated was the loftiest possible, God having nothing more magnificently resplendent in itself, or more infallibly beatific in its results, to make known to man than just his own ineffably glorious Name, its holiness (Ps. cxi. 9), faithfulness (Ps. cxlvi. 6), goodness (Ps. xxv. 8), and mercy (Exod. xxxiv. 6). Symbolically that was done by the ark of the covenant, with the tables of the Law deposited in the inner shrine of the sanctuary between the cherubim; historically that has since been done by God's Son, who in the fulness of the times came forth from the Father, and revealed him to men (Matt. i. 23; John i. 18; v. 43); fully that will be done in the heavenly temple, when God's servants shall see his face, and his Name shall be in their foreheads (Rev. xxii. 4).

Lessons. 1. The condescension of God in dwelling with man. 2. The faithfulness of God in keeping his word. 3. The sovereignty of God in working all things according to the counsel of his will. 4. The love of God in making known his Name to men.—W.

Vers. 12—21.—*The dedication of the temple: 3. The consecration prayer.* I. The person of the suppliant. Solomon. 1. *Royal.* That Solomon should have prayed was not surprising, considering the example and training he must have received from his father, and remembering the solemn and impressive spectacle he had witnessed. It is difficult to shake off habits formed within the soul by ancestral piety and early training; while, if a sense of God's nearness and a realization of God's goodness will not stimulate to prayer, it is doubtful if anything on earth will. Yet praying kings are not so numerous as they might and should, or indeed would be, did they consider their own or their people's good, not to speak of the allegiance they owe to the King of kings, by whose permission alone it is they reign (Prov. viii. 15; Dan. ii. 21). 2.

Representative. Though Solomon prayed for himself and in his own name, he nevertheless acted as the official mouthpiece of his people, who in this whole work were associated with him. Though from this it cannot be inferred that earthly sovereigns in general (or even Christian sovereigns in particular) have a right to prescribe creeds or forms of worship to, or serve vicariously for, their subjects in the duties of the sanctuary, it is still true that they occupy a sort of representative position as the nation's head, and just on that account should interest themselves in the advancement of religion amongst those who own their sway, and should frequently bear these upon their hearts before God in prayer.

II. THE DEITY ADDRESSED. The Lord God of Israel. 1. *The only God.* The language employed here by Solomon (ver. 14), and elsewhere by David (Ps. lxxxvi. 8), was not intended to concede the existence of other divinities either in heaven or on earth, but designed, like the statements of Moses (Deut. iv. 39), Rahab (Josh. ii. 11), David (2 Sam. vii. 22), and Jehovah himself (Isa. xlv. 22; xlvi. 5), to emphasize in the strongest way the unity and soleity of God (Exod. ix. 14; Deut. vi. 4; 1 Kings viii. 23; Jer. x. 6; 1 Cor. viii. 4). 2. *A covenant-keeping God.* Solomon, like all pious Israelites, like Moses (Deut. vii. 9), David (Ps. xxv. 10; lxxxix. 34; 1 Chron. xvi. 15), Nehemiah (i. 5), and Daniel (ix. 4), delighted to acknowledge Jehovah's faithfulness to his promised word. It was solely on the ground of that covenant by which God had chosen Israel for his possession (Exod. xix. 5, 8), and made himself over to be their God (Exod. xx. 2), that Israel existed as a nation and enjoyed the privilege of drawing near to God. Had it been possible for God to violate his deliberately and graciously formed engagements, or go back in the smallest measure from his promised word, Solomon knew that Israel's continuance as a people would instantly have become imperilled. That Jehovah had fulfilled the promise made to David with reference to the temple, was a proof that this contingency could not occur. The same covenant faithfulness is the believer's warrant for drawing near to God in prayer, and the suppliant's encouragement in expecting an answer (2 Cor. i. 20; 1 Thess. v. 24; Titus i. 2; Heb. vi. 18). 3. *A mercy-showing God.* This also indispensable as a characteristic of such a Divinity as man can hopefully address in prayer. For unless God can be merciful towards the undeserving and hell-deserving, it is useless to think of asking anything at his hands. The notion that man may treat with God on grounds of pure personal justice must be discarded, as neither warranted by Scripture nor supported by experience.

"'Tis from the mercy of our God
That all our hopes begin."

And that God is pre-eminently a God of mercy is the clear teaching of revelation (Exod. xxxiv. 7; Ps. ciii. 8; Micah vii. 18; Eph. ii. 4; Jas. v. 11).

III. THE MODE OF SUPPLICATION. 1. *Publicly.* The king prayed from a brazen scaffold, or basin-like elevation, perhaps resembling a modern pulpit, five cubits long, five broad, and three high, erected in the middle of the court and congregation. Prayers for one's self should not be made in public (Matt. vi. 5), the place for such being, not the synagogue, street corners, or market squares, but the inner chamber of the house, the secret room, or retiring-hall of the soul (Matt. vi. 6). 2. *Humbly.* Indicated by the attitude assumed during prayer. Hitherto, while speaking to the people, the king had stood; now, in addressing God, he kneels. David sat before the Lord (2 Sam. vii. 18); Abraham stood (Gen. xviii. 22). In Nehemiah's time the people stood and confessed their sins (ix. 2). Daniel kneeled three times a day on his knees and prayed (vi. 10). In the New Testament Scripture the Pharisee stood and prayed (Luke xviii. 11); Jesus kneeled (Luke xxii. 41); so did Stephen (Acts vii. 60), Peter (Acts ix. 40), and Paul (Acts xx. 36; xxi. 5). 3. *Fervently.* Outstretched hands were a sign of prayer generally, their heavenward direction symbolizing a solemn and earnest appeal to him who sat enthroned on high (Exod. ix. 29, 33; Ps. lxxxviii. 9; cxliii. 6; Isa. i. 15). The same thing now signified by the folding or clasping of the hands and the upward turning of the face. Both classes of actions betoken inward emotion, and fervency of spirit on the part of him who prays. 4. *Believingly.* The scaffold stood before the brazen altar. The king prayed from the neighbourhood of sacrificial blood —a recognition on his part that only through atoning blood could either himself or his supplications gain admission into Jehovah's audience-chamber, or acceptance with him

(Heb. ix. 7). It is now true that only through the blood of Jesus can one draw near to God (Heb. x. 19).

IV. The contents of the prayer. A fourfold petition. 1. *For David's house*—that it should never want a man to sit upon the throne (ver. 16). Jehovah had promised this conditionally on David's children proving faithful to their covenant obligations, and walking in the ways of righteousness and truth (2 Sam. vii. 12—16). Solomon requests that this promise may be fulfilled, not provisionally merely, but absolutely, by God dealing with David's children so that they shall take heed to their way, and walk in God's Law as David had done before them. To suppose Solomon only meant that Jehovah should stand to his word and maintain the Davidic dynasty, should it eventually prove worth maintaining, he, Jehovah, all the while severely leaving it alone, is as incorrect as to imagine that Solomon desired God to establish David's throne for ever, irrespective of the character of its occupants. What Solomon craved was the two things together—the perpetuity of David's house through the never-failing moral and spiritual worth of David's successors. 2. *For the temple*—that it might continue to be a dwelling-place for God on earth, and in the midst of men (ver. 18). Solomon saw that, without this, his magnificent edifice would turn out a comparatively worthless structure, as modern cathedrals and churches, however imposing their appearance, elaborate their ornamentation, or gigantic their dimensions, are nothing more than piles of masonry if God is absent from their aisles. Yet, so overpowered was his imagination with the bare idea of God's immensity—"Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee"—that it seemed to him doubtful if it were not the merest vanity to dream that an infinite and omnipresent Deity could inhabit even a palace such as he had erected—"how much less this house which I have built?" And in any case the condescension of it appeared so strange as to fill him with wonder and doubtful joy. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" The feelings here expressed have their counterparts in those kindled in believing hearts by the contemplation of that mystery of mysteries, the incarnation of the Eternal Son, and of that almost equally amazing fact, the inhabitation of the human heart by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iii. 16). (See next homily on ver. 18.) 3. *For himself*—that his present supplication might be answered (ver. 19). The special burden of his supplication was that Jehovah's eyes might be open upon the temple day and night, not so much for protection—though that idea must not be excluded (Ps. cxxi. 3)—as for observation; to note when any worshipper should be directing thitherward his prayer (ver. 20), lest for want of being observed such petitioner should go without an answer. The earnestness with which Solomon "cried" unto Jehovah concerning this thing was an attestation of the importance he attached to it. So far from doubting whether God could answer prayer, it seemed to him that, if God could not, his entire reputation and character as a God would be gone. 4. *For all future suppliants*—that their prayers might be heard (ver. 21). Solomon believed that his people would in after-years retain such a faith in Jehovah as to lead them to direct their supplications towards his earthly dwelling-place. Yet Solomon confounded not Jehovah's earthly habitation with his true dwelling-place in heaven, or expected responses from the lower shrine after the manner of a heathen oracle, instead of from the upper temple where Jehovah sat enthroned in unveiled glory. Jehovah's symbolic presence might be behind the screen that concealed the holy of holies; his real presence was beyond the curtain of the sky. Thence accordingly should all answers come, as thither would all petitions go. The coming of such answers would be a fruit and a sign of forgiveness.

Learn: 1. The duty of intercessory prayer (1 Tim. ii. 1). 2. The propriety of public devotion (Heb. x. 25). 3. The reverential spirit of prayer (Heb. xii. 28). 4. The reasonableness of expecting answers to prayer (Ps. v. 3).—W.

Ver. 18.—"*Will God in very deed dwell with men?*" I. Reason says, No! 1. *The greatness of God forbids it.* The heaven of heavens cannot contain him; how much less any house which man might build! or, even man's heart, which at the best is narrow and mean! The insignificance of man in comparison with the transcendent majesty of the Supreme has always been a difficulty in the way of accepting the religion of the Bible. 2. *The sinfulness of man opposes it.* Had the thing itself—the fellowship of God with man—been in reason's eyes conceivable, it would still have been negatived by the fact of man's fallen and degraded condition, with which the holiness and justice of God must have for ever, apart from an atonement, seemed impossible.

II. REVELATION ANSWERS, YES! 1. *God has already dwelt with man in the past.* (1) Symbolically, under the Hebrew dispensation, with its ark dwelling originally in the tabernacle and latterly in the temple. (2) Historically, in the fulness of the times, in the Person of Jesus Christ, who as God's Son tabernacled in the flesh on the earth and in the midst of men. Hence it may be argued, that which has been may be. 2. *God now dwells with man in the present.* "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matt. xxviii. 20), said Christ before his ascension; and again at the supper-table, "We will come and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23). Christ dwells in the hearts of his people in the Person of his Spirit (John xiv. 16). "That which is done is that which shall be done" (Eccles. i. 9). 3. *God will dwell with men visibly and personally in the future.* "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them" (Rev. xxi. 3).—W.

Vers. 22—39.—*The sevenfold illustration.* I. THE OATH OF PURGATION. (Vers. 22, 23.) 1. *The case supposed.* (Ver. 22.) (1) Common—that of a man sinning, or being suspected of sinning, against his neighbour in any of the ways specified in the Law of Moses—by theft (Exod. xxii. 10, 11), by finding and retaining lost goods (Lev. vi. 1), or in the case of a wife by adultery (Numb. v. 19—22). (2) Hard—one in which distinct and satisfactory evidence is awanting. Perhaps (3) wicked—on one side or another most likely so, either the accuser's charge or the accused's denial being consciously false. Certainly (4) solemn—an oath or appeal to Heaven having been either demanded by the accused or imposed by the accuser (Exod. xxii. 10), and carried through or performed "before the altar in his house," *i.e.* in the immediate Divine presence (Exod. xx. 24). 2. *The prayer offered.* (Ver. 23.) (1) That Jehovah would listen to the appeal of the litigants, not merely as he does to all words spoken on the earth (Ps. cxxxix. 5), in virtue of his omnipresence (Jer. xxiii. 33; Eph. i. 23), but as acting in the character of judge or umpire between the two (Job xxi. 22; Ps. ix. 7; lviii. 11; lxii. 12; Prov. xxix. 26). (2) That Jehovah would pronounce judgment on the case submitted to him (Ps. xix. 9; cxix. 137). This practically is what is meant by all judicial oath-taking. It is a virtual placing of the case before God, that he may elicit a true and righteous verdict (Rom. ii. 2; 1 Pet. i. 17). (3) That Jehovah would make known his decision by punishing the guilty and vindicating the innocent (Gen. xviii. 25; Exod. xxxiv. 7; 2 Sam. xxii. 26; Nah. i. 3), not by supernaturally interposing to smite the former with death, as in the case of Korah and his company (Numb. xvi. 32), or as in the case of Miriam (Numb. xii. 10), with some malady which might be interpreted as a signal of the Divine displeasure, but by providentially bringing it about that the wickedness of the wicked should be discovered, as in the cases of Abimelech (Judg. ix. 56) and Haman (Esth. vii. 10), and the uprightness of the good man should be declared, as in those of Job (xlii. 10) and David (Ps. xli. 12).

II. THE PRAYER OF THE CAPTIVE. (Vers. 24, 25.) 1. *The instance selected.* That of God's ancient people (1) having sinned against God, which they had often done in days past (Ps. cvi. 6; lxxviii. 17; Hos. x. 9), and would most probably do again (ch. vi. 36; 1 Kings viii. 46); (2) having been defeated in battle on this account, as frequently before had happened to them (Judg. vii. 1, 5; 1 Sam. iv. 3); (3) having been carried off in part into exile, as they subsequently were into Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 5) and Babylon (2 Kings xxv. 21); (4) having repented of their wickedness (1 Kings viii. 47), saying as at Mizpeh, "We have sinned against the Lord" (1 Sam. vii. 6), or as at Jerusalem in the restoration, "Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day" (Ezra ix. 7); (5) having confessed God's Name in their sorrowful calamity, *i.e.* acknowledged God's justice in all that had befallen them (Ps. li. 4; Rom. iii. 4); and (6) having prayed and made supplication before God in the temple, *i.e.* those of them who remained behind for those who had been carried off. 2. *The request presented.* (1) That God would hear from heaven the cry of his suppliant people, and so vindicate his condescending character as a prayer-hearing God (Ps. lxv. 2; Isa. xlv. 11). (2) That he would forgive the sin of his erring people, and so prove himself a gracious and compassionate God (Exod. xxxiv. 9; Neh. ix. 17; Ps. lxxviii. 38; lxxxvi. 5; Isa.

lv. 7). (3) That he would restore his banished ones to their own land, and so show himself a faithful and covenant-keeping God (Deut. vii. 9; Neh. i. 5; Dan. ix. 4; 1 Kings viii. 23).

III. THE CRY OF THE FAMISHED. (Vers. 26, 27.) 1. *The distress pictured.* Solomon imagines a state of matters that in Oriental countries might easily happen, when through long-continued drought, as in the days of Joseph (Gen. xli. 57), the inhabitants might be perishing (or in danger of perishing) through lack of food—a state of matters not unknown in the land of Israel, both before (Ruth i. 1; 2 Sam. xxi. 1) and after (1 Kings xvii. 7; 2 Kings iv. 38; vi. 25—29; xxv. 3; Acts xi. 28) his time, and commonly regarded as a visible token of Divine displeasure on account of sin (Lev. xxvi. 20; Deut. xi. 17; xxviii. 23; Amos iv. 7), as abundance of rain and fertility of ground were customarily accepted as intimations of Heaven's favour (Lev. xxvi. 4; Jer. v. 24; Joel ii. 23). The state of matters depicted is rendered even more sorrowful, and the wretchedness more pitiable, by the fact that the famine and the drought spoken of are represented as having been sent upon the people on account of their wickedness, exactly as Jehovah had threatened. 2. *The condition presupposed.* Solomon asks nothing for his people when in this plight except under limitations. He requests absolutely neither the complete removal of the judgment nor its mitigation. He assumes that his people shall have (1) learned the lesson designed to be taught by the afflictive dispensation sent upon them, since in his dealings neither with nations nor with individuals does God afflict the children of men willingly or gratuitously, but always for their profit (Heb. xii. 10), that he might impart to them instruction (Job xxxiii. 16) concerning their sin (Job xxxvi. 9, 10), lead them back into "the good way" (Ezek. xiv. 10; xx. 37, 43), and make them fruitful in holy deeds (Heb. xii. 11; Jas. i. 2—4); (2) put the lesson in practice by turning from sin and walking in the good way, acknowledging the Divine justice in their calamity, and supplicating the Divine forgiveness of their trespass—three things, reformation, contrition, and prayer, without which none need expect mercy even from a God of grace. 3. *The favour solicited.* (1) A favourable audience: "Hear thou from heaven." (2) Immediate forgiveness: "And forgive the sin of thy servants." (3) Effectual assistance: "Send rain upon thy land." 4. *The reason given.* (1) The stricken people are "thy people"—"thy people Israel," to whom thou art engaged in covenant. God loves to be reminded of the gracious and endearing relationship in which believers stand towards him—he having taken them for his people, and made himself over to them as their God. (2) The barren land is "thy land" even more than thy people's. It is thine by right of creation; theirs in virtue of donation: "Thou hast given it to thy people." Thine by possession; theirs by inheritance: "Thou hast given it to them for an inheritance." God's people have nothing they have not received from him (1 Cor. iv. 7; Jas. i. 17). Yet all things are theirs, as co-heirs with Christ (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23).

IV. THE WAIL OF THE AFFLICTED. (Vers. 28—31.) 1. *Their case described.* (Ver. 28.) Their distress—stricken by plague or sickness—is set forth (1) as to its character, which might be either national or individual, since no man or community may claim exemption from the stroke of outward calamity; (2) as to its cause, which might be either a "dearth in the land," a failure in the fruits of the earth, in consequence of long-continued drought as in the days of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1), or a destruction of the same by pestilence, by "blasting or mildew," by "locust or caterpillar," such as Moses had threatened God would send upon them if they apostatized from him (Deut. xxviii. 22), and as he afterwards did send upon them in the days of Amos (iv. 9), or a famine superinduced by a siege like that which occurred in Samaria in the days of Elisha (2 Kings vi. 25); (3) as to its consequence, which is supposed by the king to have been salutary, leading the afflicted people, collectively and individually, to a knowledge of their sin, as in the instances of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 18) and of the Israelites in the wilderness (Numb. xxi. 7), and to a crying unto God in prayer as formerly the people had done when sore distressed by the children of Ammon (Judg. x. 15), and as afterwards Manasseh did when God laid affliction on his loins (ch. xxxiii. 12). 2. *Their cause pleaded.* (1) The blessings craved on their behalf were acceptance of their prayers whensoever they were moved to cry to Heaven, and whatsoever supplication might ascend from their lips—forgiveness of their sins, out of which all their trouble had arisen; requital of their deeds, by giving unto each man according to his ways, which has always been the Divine principle of dealing with men (Job xxxiv. 11) under the New Testament dispensation (Rom. ii. 6; Matt. xvi. 27) quite as much as under the Old (Ps. lxii. 12; Prov. xxiv. 12; Jer. xvii. 10; Ezek. xxxiii. 20). (2) The arguments employed in support of these requests were founded on God's omniscience as a Searcher of hearts, which in its operation extended to all—"Thou knowest the hearts of all the children of men;" and belonged only to him—"thou only knowest;" and on the moral and spiritual effect which such exercise of clemency would have upon the objects of it—"that they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers." It is doubtful if men are ever improved by outward calamity alone. Deterred from crime they may be, through fear of the sword; they are not likely to be changed at heart without an experience of Divine mercy.

V. THE PRAYER OF THE STRANGER. (Vers. 32, 33.) 1. *His personal history narrated.* (1) He is a stranger—not of thy people; one belonging to the Gentile world, which, in respect of relation to Jehovah, stood on an altogether different footing from Israel, and in respect of privilege was not "near unto God" as Israel was (Ps. cxlviii. 14), but "afar off" (Eph. ii. 17), not merely geographically (Isa. lxvi. 19; Jer. xxxi. 10), but also religiously, being "separate from Christ" or from the hope of Messiah, "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). (2) He has heard of Jehovah's great Name, and of Israel's relation thereto. Though the Hebrew Church was not missionary in the proper sense of that expression, her gates were closed against none who sought admission within her pale (Isa. lx. 11). In contradistinction, the New Testament Church is under obligation not alone to keep her gates open, but, going out into the highways and among the nations of the earth, to compel men to come in (Matt. xxviii. 19; Luke xiv. 23). Solomon expected that the nations of the earth would be attracted towards Israel by the report of his greatness and of his glorious achievements on behalf of Israel (1 Kings viii. 42); how much more should Christians anticipate the flowing towards them of the inhabitants of heathen lands, to whom they bear the glad tidings of salvation, and eternal life through him who was and is the highest embodiment of Jehovah's Name? (3) He has come from his distant home to worship at Jehovah's altar, if not permanently separating himself from his heathen kinsmen like Abraham (Gen. xii. 4), at least doing so for a season like the chamberlain of Candace (Acts viii. 27). 2. *His religious conduct described.* He is represented as (1) praying, calling, asking with audible voice and fervent heart—prayer a natural instinct of the awakened soul, and one of the first signs of grace (Acts ix. 11); (2) praying unto Jehovah, the only right Object of prayer, not unto heathen divinities which cannot hear or help their devotees (Ps. cxv. 4–8); (3) praying in the temple, then the appointed place (Exod. xx. 24), though now any spot on earth may serve as an oratory (John iv. 21). 3. *His favourable acceptance requested.* (1) For his own sake, that he may have the joy of answered prayer; and (2) for the nation's sake, that men might come to fear Jehovah and recognize the temple as his dwelling-place.

VI. THE APPEAL OF THE SOLDIER. (Vers. 34, 35.) 1. *A fourfold assumption.* (1) That the people shall have gone forth against their enemies—which they did not always do when they should (1 Sam. xvii. 11), just as Christian soldiers, called to do battle with the principalities and powers of darkness (Eph. vi. 12), sometimes sulk like Achilles in their tents instead of marching forth like David to meet the foe (1 Sam. xvii. 40). If not always right for either nations or individuals to go to war with their enemies (Jas. iv. 1), it is never wrong for Churches or Christians to contend against their spiritual foes (1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7). (2) That the way in which they have gone forth has been of God's choosing—an important distinction. As many run upon errands not of God's sending, so many plunge into strifes and contentions without God's directing. Even when the battle is of God's appointing, *i.e.* when nation, Church, or individual feels that the warfare to be entered on has God's countenance so far as its object is concerned, it is still conceivable that it may be entered on in a way that God cannot approve. Hence Solomon assumes that Israel shall have gone out upon their campaign "by the way that thou shalt send them." It were well that all warriors, national and individual, political, social, religious, evinced a like solicitude to go forth by God's ways rather than their own. (3) That they have solemnly commended their cause to God in prayer. This presupposes that their cause is right, which of necessity it must be since God has sent them to the field. But all appeals to Heaven from battalions preparing to plunge into strife have not equal ground to rest upon. Neither kings nor parliaments, neither soldiers nor private persons, neither Christian Churches nor Christian individuals, should go to fight unless sure they can pray upon the scene of conflict. (4) That they have directed their prayer to the city of Jerusalem and the temple of Jehovah. Any sort of prayer will not suffice. It must be prayer in the manner God has shown. 2. *A twofold petition.* (1) That their prayer should be heard—"Hear thou," etc.—and (2) that their cause should be maintained. Both petitions Solomon might offer with confidence, seeing it is God's practice to attend to the supplication of the needy, more especially when their need arises from doing his will, and seeing that, though God is not always on man's side, he ever is upon his own. If not always on the side of the strongest battalions, he is always on the side of truth and right.

VII. THE SUPPLICATION OF THE EXILE. (Vers. 36—39.) 1. *The calamity apprehended.* (1) That the people should sin against God. A dreadful apprehension, considering the character and power of God; yet natural, remembering the universal corruption of the race: "There is no man who sinneth not" (Ps. xiv. 3; Eccles. vii. 20; Rom. iii. 23). (2) That God should be angry with them. This inevitable if the preceding hypothesis should be at any time realized (Exod. xxxii. 33; xxxiv. 7; Ps. vii. 11; xi. 6; lxxviii. 21; Isa. lxiv. 7; Luke xix. 27; Rom. i. 18). If God cannot but be angry with unforgiven and unrenewed men when they sin, he cannot possibly be pleased with his people when they backslide into wicked ways. (3) That God should permit them to be defeated by their enemies. This they had oftentimes experienced because of their transgression (Josh. vii. 2; Judg. ii. 15; xiii. 1; 1 Sam. iv. 1); the king feared that a like experience might occur again. That which had been might be. (4) That God should suffer them to be carried captive into a foreign land whether far or near. This Solomon knew to be the common lot of prisoners of war. The monumental histories of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon have rendered Bible students familiar with this phase of ancient warfare. The king also knew that such a fate had been threatened against his people in the event of their declining from their covenant fidelity to Jehovah (Deut. xxviii. 63). 2. *The supposition made.* (1) That the captive people should bethink themselves of their sinfulness in the land of their captivity. Such as have no consideration of their wickedness while at home, amongst friends, and in circumstances of outward prosperity, not unfrequently are led to serious reflection when far from home, among strangers, and in want. So the Israelites were in Egypt (Exod. ii. 23) and again in Babylon (Ps. cxxxvii. 1); so was the prodigal in the far country (Luke xv. 17). (2) That they should make candid acknowledgment of the same unto God saying, "We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly;" not merely in a mild way stating the fact, but with earnest repetition emphasizing the guilt of their declension from God, as Moses had enjoined them in such circumstances to do (Lev. xxvi. 40), as the Babylonian captives afterwards did (Ps. cvi. 6; Dan. ix. 5), as did the returned exiles under Ezra (ix. 7), and as all who hope in God's mercy are expected to do (1 John i. 9). (3) That they should return to Jehovah with all their hearts—a step beyond and in advance of confession. This, when earnest and sincere, ought to lead to reformation, but because it is sometimes formal and purely verbal it does not always bring amendment in its wake. Hence the necessity of insisting upon a practical demonstration of its genuineness by a renunciation of those evil courses which have been confessed, and a reassumption of those good ways which have been forsaken (Isa. lv. 7; Ezek. xviii. 21; Dan. iv. 27; Amos v. 14, 15; Matt. iii. 8; Rev. ii. 5). (4) That they should pray to Jehovah in the land of their captivity, directing their supplication "towards the land of their fathers," thereby evidencing their faith in Jehovah's covenant, "and towards the city which thou hast chosen," so acknowledging Jehovah's grace, "and toward the house which I have built for thy Name," in that fashion showing their belief in Jehovah's readiness to forgive—all of which are still indispensable as subjective conditions of acceptable prayer. 3. *The intercession made.* That God would grant his repenting and praying people (1) an audience to their supplications by admitting these to his dwelling-place in heaven, and into the ear of his infinite heart; (2) support in their cause as against their oppressors, by upholding them while in exile, and by causing them to return from it in his own time and way; and (3) forgiveness of their sins, since without this all other blessings are in vain.

Learn: 1. That good prayers, while never prolix, vague, or rambling, are always full, specific, and well arranged. 2. That the loftiest prayer a human lip can utter is that of intercession for the welfare of others. 3. That, though the heart of man stands in no need of arguments to make it pray, it is not forbidden to employ arguments in the act of prayer. 4. That prayer, conceived as the converse of a finite soul with the infinite Deity, is the highest exercise of which a creature is capable. 5. That long prayers do not weary God, though meaningless repetitions do.—W.

Vers. 40—42.—*A prayer for the Church of God.* I. FOR ITS CONGREGATIONS. 1. *That God would make them his resting-place.* "Arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place" (ver. 41). Taken from the battle-cry of the nation when the ark set forward to search out a resting-place for them (Numb. x. 33—36), the words imply a request that Jehovah Elohim, the covenant God of Israel, would make of the temple, and therefore of that which it symbolized, the Church of God, collectively and severally, as a whole and in its individual assemblies: (1) A place of permanent indwelling, an abode of rest, a home or habitation of repose, a mansion or fixed residence, out of which he should no more depart. Such had Jehovah promised of Mount Zion (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14), and such has Christ promised concerning the smallest and humblest gatherings of his people (Matt. xiii. 20). (2) A scene of gracious manifestation. It cannot be imagined that Solomon merely wished to have Jehovah's symbolic presence behind the veil in the inner shrine of the temple, in the form of a cloud of smoke and fire. What he craved was Jehovah's real, personal presence; and that he would not have desired (or at least could hardly have been much concerned about) had he understood that the only way in which God could dwell among them was in silence and in solitude, wrapped up in contemplation of his own measureless perfections and shut off from all intercourse with his creatures, and even with his chosen and covenanted people. But Solomon knew that if Jehovah condescended to pitch his residence among them, it would be for the purpose of making gracious revelations of himself as a God of love and mercy, and gracious communications of himself as the Life and Light of his believing people; and Christians know that this is the specific object God in Christ has in view in establishing his real, though unseen, presence in the assemblies and hearts of his followers (John xiv. 21—23). (3) A spring of Divine satisfaction. Unless it should be this it could not prove a resting-place for Jehovah. Jehovah must obtain in it, in its services and celebrations, and much more in the dispositions and actions, hearts and lives, of its worshippers, that satisfaction which his holy and loving nature demands; otherwise he will be constrained to withdraw from their midst, from their hearts and from their convocations, from their temples and from their altars. So can God in Christ only rest in those Churches and individuals where he smells a sweet savour of faith, hope, love, penitence, humility, obedience, rising from such spiritual sacrifices as they offer to his Name. 2. *That God would establish in them the tokens of his power.* "Arise, O Lord . . . thou, and the ark of thy strength." The outwardly mean and insignificant wooden box called the ark was a symbol of God's physical almightiness, which commonly worked through feeble instruments; of his commanding omnipotence, which was ever based on essential holiness; and of his grace-bestowing power, which revealed itself upon and in and through a mercy-seat. Hence, in seeking that the ark might find in the temple a resting-place, Solomon practically asked that Jehovah would, through it as a medium, manifest to Israel his power (1) in protecting and defending them against their adversaries, (2) in ruling and governing them by statutes and ordinances, and (3) in forgiving them and enriching them with grace. The same three forms of strength Jehovah still puts forth within the Christian Church. He dwells within her, as he did in ancient Israel, as Defender and Deliverer (Ps. lxxxiv. 11; xci. 1—7; Isa. xxxi. 5; Zech. ii. 5; Matt. xvi. 18; 2 Thess. iii. 3; Rev. iii. 10); as Sovereign and Ruler (Ps. xxiv. 1; xliv. 4; lxxiv. 12; xcv. 3; Isa. xxxiii. 22; xliii. 15; Mal. i. 14; Matt. vi. 13; Heb. i. 3; Jas. iv. 12; Rev. xix. 6); and as Redeemer and Friend (Isa. xii. 2; xli. 14; xlvii. 4; Luke i. 68; John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32; 1 Tim. ii. 8). 3. *That God would listen to the prayers that in them ascended from the hearts of his people.* "Let . . . thine eyes be open, and thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place." The temple was designed to be a place of prayer for all people (Isa. lvi. 7; Matt. xxi. 13; Mark xi. 17; Luke xix. 46), for all people to resort to with supplications for themselves and on behalf of all sorts of people; the like characteristics belong to the Church of the New Testament (Luke xviii. 1; xxiv. 52, 53; Eph. vi. 18; 1 Thess. v. 17; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 8).

II. For its ministers. That they might be clothed with salvation (ver. 41), or righteousness (Ps. cxxxii. 9)—the two terms in the Old Testament being synonymous, or at least so connected that the one implies the other (cf. Isa. lxi. 10). Rightly understood, salvation is the outcome and result of righteousness. The soul that is righteous outwardly and inwardly, judicially or legally, and morally or personally, is saved; while none are saved by whom that righteousness is not possessed, either in whole as by the glorified, or in part as by Christian believers—

> "Whose faith receives a righteousness
> That makes the sinner just."

In seeking, then, that the temple priests might be clothed with salvation, Solomon desired: 1. *That they might be personally good men.* Upright and sincere in their hearts before God, virtuous and correct in their walk before men—men like Noah (Gen. vii. 1), Abraham (Gen. xvii. 1), Job (i. 1; xxix. 14), David (Ps. vii. 8), and Nathanael (John i. 47); since only men themselves righteous, in the sense of being justified and accepted before God as well as renewed and possessed of the germ of holiness, were warranted to minister at God's altar (Exod. xxii. 31; Lev. xi. 44; Ps. l. 16). The like qualification the Church of Christ should ever seek in those who serve in her pulpits. Anything more calamitous than an insincere and immoral, because unbelieving and unconverted ministry, can hardly be imagined as befalling the Christian Church. The first requisite of him who would preach the gospel is a hearty acceptance of the same in faith and humility, love and obedience—the foundation of all true piety. 2. *That they might be clothed with salvation in their official ministrations.* That their whole being should be absorbed (and so visibly that men might behold it) in the work of saving God's people. If indispensable as a mark of a true Heaven-appointed priest under the Law, much more is this requisite as a qualification of the Christ-sent preacher under the gospel. Pastors and teachers in the New Testament Church who aim not at the salvation of themselves and their hearers (1 Tim. iv. 16) are intruders into the sacred office. The one theme which has a claim to monopolize the time, talents, thought, eloquence, zeal of the Christian minister is the gospel of Christ—"the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. i. 16).

III. For its people. That they might rejoice in goodness (ver. 41). Notice: 1. *The designation.* Saints (1 Sam. ii. 19; Ps. xxx. 4; l. 5; cxlix. 1). The term literally signifies kind, excellent, one who shows favour, hence pious (Gesenius); or one who has obtained favour, hence beloved (Perowne). In both senses were God's ancient people "saints." They were objects of Jehovah's favour (Deut. vii. 8; 1 Kings x. 9; ch. ii. 11), beloved for the fathers' sakes (Rom. xi. 28); and were, or should have been, kind and beneficent (Lev. xix. 18; Ps. cxii. 5; Prov. x. 12; Zech. vii. 9). So likewise are New Testament believers beloved for Christ's sake (Rom. i. 7; Eph. i. 6), and commanded to love one another (John xiii. 34, 35; xv. 17; Rom. xii. 10; Gal. v. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 17; 1 John iv. 7, 21). The customary sense in which the term "saint" is used is that of separated, or holy one (Deut. xxxiii. 3; Job xv. 15; Ps. xxxiv. 9; Acts ix. 13; Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. i. 1). 2. *The emotion.* Gladness. Nothing more remarkable than the emphasis placed by both Testaments upon "joy" as an experience which should belong pre-eminently to God's saints (Deut. xxxiii. 29; 1 Sam. ii. 1; Ps. v. 11; lxxxiv. 4; c. 1, 2; Isa. xxix. 19; Rom. xii. 12; xiv. 17; Gal. v. 22; Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4). Where joy is habitually absent, there is reason to suspect that either the individual is no true believer at all, or is under mistaken apprehensions concerning God or himself, or is affected by some malady, bodily or mental, which disturbs his peace. Yet the primal fountain of all joy for the religious soul is God (Neh. viii. 10; Job viii. 21; Ps. iv. 7; xxx. 11; John xiv. 27; xv. 11; xvi. 22; xvii. 13; Rom. v. 2; xv. 13). 3. *The occasion.* Goodness; *i.e.* in the highest sense. Not merely God's common gifts of corn and wine, though even in these a saint can exult with a propriety which none can feel but those who recognize everything they have as coming from a Father's hand; but chiefly God's highest gifts of grace and salvation, and in particular God's great and unspeakable Gift, Jesus Christ (2 Cor. ix. 15).

IV. FOR ITS KING. That God would regard him with favour (ver. 42). God's anointed in the passage under consideration was Solomon; but the great Anointed, of whom he was a shadow, was Christ, whom God anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows (Ps. xlv. 7), and set as King upon his holy hill of Zion (Ps. ii. 6). The language of the prayer, therefore, may be applied to Christ, the Church's Head and King. 1. *In meaning* it may signify that God would continue to regard him with favour, and show this by not denying his request (1 Kings ii. 16). As thus interpreted, it teaches that Christ's Church has a deep interest in the success of all Christ's prayers on their behalf, and should make this a frequent burden of her supplications, that Jehovah would hear the intercessions of her anointed Head within the veil for transgressors (Isa. liii. 12), for believers (Heb. vii. 25), for the sanctification of his own (John xvii. 17), for the conversion of the world (John xvii. 20), for the final consummation of all things (John xvii. 24). 2. The *arguments* by which the prayer may be supported are two: (1) The king's relation to God—he is God's anointed (Ps. xlv. 7); and (2) the covenant engagement which God has made with him as David's son. These were the pleas advanced by Solomon; they are more befitting in the mouths of Christians regarding Christ.

Learn: 1. The sublimity of true prayer. 2. The comprehensive scope of prayer. 3. The exalted character of the Church as God's dwelling-place, and as Christ's kingdom. 4. The grand aim of the Church as a visible institution to promote salvation. 5. The entire dependence of the Church for efficiency on God.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter is occupied with three subjects. *First,* the description of Heaven's acceptance of the dedicated temple by fire (vers. 1—3). *Secondly,* the sacrifices and glad feasting of Solomon and all Israel for several days (vers. 4—11). *Thirdly,* the articulate answer of God to the offering and the prayer of Solomon (vers. 12—22).

Ver. 1.—When Solomon had made an end of praying. See the parallel, 1 Kings viii. 54, which verse, however, in a sense, disappoints us; for, beginning with these same words, it does not go on at all to tell of this second occurrence of the fire and the cloud and the glory. **The fire came . . . and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices.** So Lev. ix. 24, when the tabernacle was consecrated. The closing verses of our ch. v., compared with the first verse of ch. vi., and in particular the first word of that verse, "then," leave it quite open to conjecture that the demonstration of the fire and the glory of the Lord had not ceased, but was continued during the prayer of Solomon, though at its close they may have been marked with added brightness, and then wrought their sacrifice-consuming work. Such supposition may bring us nearest to some tenable explanation of what otherwise seems the very unaccountable omission in the parallel. The language of our ver. 2 adds something to countenance this theory, coinciding as it does with the language of the last verses of ch. v.

Ver. 3.—For he is good (so ch. v. 13; 1 Chron. xvi. 34).

Vers. 4, 5.—These two verses bring us again into company with the parallel in its vers. 62, 63. Let it be noticed that in both these verses the compiler of Chronicles avoids the words, "all Israel," and "all the children of Israel," in favour of all the people. The parallel tells us that the sacrifices in part were *peace offerings,* eatable, therefore, by priests and people. Large as the numbers of the oxen and sheep sacrificed, yet indications in the narrative round about do something to sustain them, as *e.g.* the number of people who had come together; the fact that all the people are said to offer sacrifices; the fact that Solomon, because of the press for room (ver. 7), hallowed the middle of the court, *i.e.* probably the court itself, in order to find place for the "burnt offerings, meat offerings, and fat" (ver. 7); further, the number of mouths of people that certainly would need filling, not only on one day, but on days more than one, while on the third day (Lev. xix. 6) any part of a peace offering still left was to be destroyed by fire. Nevertheless, the thought of the scene of butchery is, to our modern imagination, amazing to the last degree. An assemblage of people in Jerusalem, all making also for its temple, of a hundred and twenty thousand people, and a minimum of another twenty-two thousand people, is startling; but add to these a sheep apiece for the former number, and an ox apiece for the latter (a computation itself necessarily under the mark), and allow several days to be covered by the killing and sacrificing, and one feels that the key and explanation of the present words of the Bible text in this very passage are scarcely in hand. The interesting note in the 'Speaker's Commentary' on 1 Kings viii. 63 scarcely assists us. Its instances of the "profusion" of the "sacrifices of antiquity" are altogether and immensely distanced by the narrative before us, not only in the number of victims, but in respect of the time in which the victims had to be despatched and disposed of, and the place and space within which, if not the slaughtering, yet certainly the offering, had to be done.

Ver. 6.—This verse is not found in the parallel (ch. v. 12, 13; 1 Chron. xv. 16; xxiii. 5).

Ver. 8.—Also at the same time . . . the feast; *i.e. the* Feast of Tabernacles, which occupied the seven days from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the month Tisri (Lev. xxiii. 34). Thus fourteen days (1 Kings viii. 65) were occupied by the two feasts, that of the temple consecration and that of Tabernacles, while on the fifteenth day of feasting, viz. the twenty-third of the month Tisri, or Ethanim (the seventh month), the people went home. The entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt; *i.e.* from the extreme north to the extreme south of the land. The town Hamath was on the Orontes, through the valley of the Lebanon (Josh. xiii. 3, 5; also Numb. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 8; Judg. iii. 3; 2 Kings xiv. 25; 1 Chron. xiii. 5; Amos vi. 2, 14). *The river of Egypt*; or, *the river before Egypt* (Josh. xiii. 3), was the Shihor, or Sihor, separating Egypt and Judæa.

Ver. 9.—Solemn assembly. The word thus translated in the Authorized Version occurs (including both its but very slightly differing forms) eleven times. Five of these times the margin offers, probably unnecessarily, the optional rendering of "restraint." It may be that the root involves this idea, and certainly the word is especially used for the seventh or closing day of Passover, and eighth or closing day of Tabernacles; but other occasions of its use seem to negative this as an essential element in the signification or essential condition of the use of the word; *e.g.* "Proclaim a solemn assembly" (2 Kings x. 20); "Call a solemn assembly" (Joel i. 14; ii. 15).

Ver. 11.—(See now for the parallel 1 Kings ix. 1—9.) The king's house . . . the house of the Lord . . . his own house. The expressions that we have in this verse guide us amid some ambiguities to the correct date of the consecration of the temple. The verse purports to speak of the final completion of the temple and the king's house or palace, with all whatsoever that was necessary to them in the matter of their furnishing. And, to say the least, the impression naturally produced on the reader is that they are spoken of as being *thus* completed simultaneously, although, beyond doubt, there was a sense in which the temple was (not utterly finished but) built long before the palace. Accordingly, when the next verse tells us of God's answer vouchsafed to the dedication prayer of Solomon, we are not driven to the supposition that several years had elapsed since the final completion of the temple and the dedication of it on the one hand, nor, on the other hand, a similar interval lost between the dedication prayer and the Divine acknowledgment of it. It may be again stated that the main structure of the temple (not including courts, pillars, furnishing, vessels, etc.) was built after seven years' process, in the eleventh year of Solomon's reign, but the palace only after another complete twelve years (1 Kings vii. 1), in Solomon's twenty-fourth year. A liberal study of the parallel narrative of Kings in its entirety strengthens considerably this view, inasmuch as there the whole account of the palace-building finds its place previous to the account of the dedicating of the temple. However, though there can be little practical doubt as to how the facts of the case stood and stand, yet this occasion must count one to be added to the chronological memorabilia of Scripture, in that, while both the accounts to which we have access leave very vague the very things we should naturally expect to have been stated concisely, they also both seem entirely unconscious of it—a directest outcome of the fact that both writers were but picking their own way in the midst of borrowed material, neither of them the original historian.

Ver. 12.—See 1 Kings iii. 5; ix. 2; Deut. xii 2, 3, 5—7, 11, 14; and, by turning to the last of these sets of references, the emphasis laid here upon the house as the house of sacrifice will be amply accounted for without supposing a rather premature *aside* as regards synagogues. Meantime, what a feature, manifestly, the *sacrifices* were!

Vers. 13—15.—These three verses (the counterparts of ch. vi. 26, 28, 40) are not in the parallel. Although we can scarcely trace the principle of their selection from the seven parts of the prayer, they would seem to have been selected from the original work, as samples of a reply which presumably embraced reference to *all* the seven. When, in ver. 14, it is said, I will heal their land, the telling expression, according to the Authorized Version, must be understood to refer to the removing of drought by rain. On the other hand, the Authorized Version is, in ver. 15, unfortunate in the unnecessary and misleading insertion of the *italics* found there, and in the use of the preposition "in" for *of*, the simple case *construct*, which is manifestly what is wanted and intended. It was not absolutely essential that prayer should be made *in* the place. How many references there are to prayer being made from a distance *toward* the place!

Ver. 16.—This verse glances, as an answer to the contents, or spirit of the contents, of the second petition at ch. vi. 18—21. The beautiful touching condescension in the wording of the last clause, **Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually**, will not escape notice.

Vers. 17, 18.—These two verses glance at the first petition of Solomon's prayer (ch. vi. 15—17). (See also ch. iii. 12; 2 Sam. vii. 12; 1 Chron. xxii. 10.)

Vers. 19, 20.—**And forsake.** The parallel (1 Kings ix. 6) puts it, according to the Authorized Version, "If ye shall *at all* turn from following me," etc., which rendering on the part of the Authorized Version probably errs by excess. Much mercy, much forbearing, long-suffering, and slowness to anger, were sure to mark the Divine rule; nor would condemnation take effect, nor *did* it take effect, till the revolt of the people was a thorough revolt, as finally testifying itself in the crucifixion of Christ (see also, as comments on the expressions of these two verses, Lev. xxvi. 14; Deut. iv. 26, 27; xxviii. 37, and generally 15—64). The same Hebrew words for a proverb and a byword among all nations are found in ver. 37, as just quoted.

Ver. 21.—The Hebrew text of the first sentence of this verse differs here from that in the parallel; but, in fact, neither text reads satisfactorily and smoothly. The parallel (1 Kings ix. 8) inserts the little word "at," though without italics, and "which" in italic type. The "at" is no doubt intended to be condoned as supposed to belong to the word astonished; the following verb hiss also permitting, though not requiring, the appendage. Not leaning to the text of the parallel (which shows no אֲשֶׁר, and which shows the substantive verb in the future tense יִהְיֶה), we need not find any particular difficulty in rendering our present text, **And this house, which is most high** (the word well favours this idea), **shall be an astonishment to every passer by.** The Septuagint reads simply, "This lofty house." **Why hath the Lord done this?** (see Deut. xxix. 24; Jer. xxii. 8, 9). To the "astonishment" prophesied here the parallel adds, "shall hiss"—in a forcible expression found first in ch. xxix. 8, and afterwards in Micah (vi. 16) and in Jeremiah (xviii. 16; xix. 8; xxv. 9, etc.; Lam. ii. 15, 16).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—22.—*The testimony by fire, and the vouchsafed glory of the Lord.* This chapter invites attention to four subjects, no one of which is entirely fresh, but each one of which owns to fresh impressiveness by virtue of position, particularity of description, and the more touching associations which now surround it. Attention, then, may be called first of all and chiefly to—

I. THE MARVEL OF THE DESCENDING FIRE FROM HEAVEN. It is remarkable that the parallel (1 Kings viii.) does not mention this great event, and that a similar event is again carefully recorded by the writer of Chronicles (1 Chron. xxi. 26). Such a descending, kindling, lambent, and consuming fire—what a sign and token it was! What a startling testimony—to give a moment's directness of help to our own thought—such a manifestation of the elder Church would be to some finished effort of our later ecclesiastical life! It is not given, it is not *to be* given, to us. But never must we allow ourselves to forget that its spiritual antitype is to be believed in, sought by prayer, beheld in purest vision of the elevated spiritual imagination, and to be regarded as indispensable. It meant, and its real and more spiritual fulfilment means: 1. *The notice of heaven.* What a genuine help to us, to have reason to believe this, and therefore gratefully to *cultivate the sense of it!* The notice of heaven means nothing, or it means the notice of God. As surely as a deep present conviction of that notice is calculated to deter from sin, so surely is it adapted to encourage us in worship, prayer, praise, meditation, and reading of the Word of God, and to dignify to us the nature of every engagement. 2. *The approval of heaven.* There is much indeed that the eye of God unfailingly *notices*, but as unfailingly *disapproves*. Descending fire more than once was the proof in the history of the people of Israel of *this* also, but it was very different descent and of altogether differing manifestation. 3. *The actual participation and co-operation of heaven.* The dedication of the temple was one thing, but the consecration of it was another, and though, indeed, it was not even such fire as this that by itself *did* the consecration or was of the essence of it, yet it was the evidence of it, and the visible sign and act of it. The fire of holy feeling, of devoutness, of devotion, of love, of *pure adoring* worship, is not of nature, nor of the ministry of man, nor of the ability of the high priest or any priest, to kindle. The kindling must come from the throne itself, whither whatsoever it is that we may have to offer is ascending. The sacrifices of prayer, of praise, of a poor, broken, contrite heart, need all and each the inspiring illumination and fire of and from *the altar itself*. What a thought, what a truth, for us! Our worship and our works of devotion need to be *pervaded* with this conviction, and if they were so, at how much higher a level would they be found, and with how much steadier life would they show themselves forth! Moments, and sometimes even hours, of our inner consciousness would in no way fall short, for impression, conviction, and surpassing joy and peace, of what were present actually now, in the rapt, and again the impassioned, experience of all Israel. That moment was indeed a moment worth a nation's living for. Read the verses (1, 2, 3) themselves. But the instance is but one of a thousand, that tell how soon impression fades away, of what may be most grand, most significant of all, when its source comes from without. The deeper things of our hearts may last longer. Let us therefore seek, honour, prize, *them* rather!

II. The fact that, with the finishing, dedication, and consecration of the temple, THE FULL COMPLEMENT OF THE SERVICES OF RELIGION WAS ESTABLISHED. In four particulars this is noted, viz. the unanimous effort of king and people to accomplish the full number of sacrifices; the falling of the priests into their places, and the filling of their regular offices; the same of the Levites with their instruments of music; and lastly, the hallowing of the middle of the court before the house, as an auxiliary place for the offering of burnt offerings and of the fat of the peace offerings. This was by no means the one solitary time, or the last time, that has illustrated the general principle of the utility of having the outer form and the outer institutions of the Church order in their place and in distinct prominence. While the Church is on earth, at least, the things of the eye, the things of the ear, memories, associations, company, and the stronger kinds and forces of anticipation—all help religious fidelity; they are *naturally* fitted to do so, and, as thus naturally adapted to high use, are not justifiably to be neglected, slighted, underrated, or presumptuously regarded, as either optional in all cases, or quite dispensable in the case of those who credit themselves with a larger measure of spiritual power and principle than belongs to others. This very assumption is, *per se*, too generally decisive of an opposite state of things. We have at present comparatively little to do with what may prove to be the mode, the infinitely grander mode, of worship and service up above. But *here* the *form has* its importance; and if so, the righter form, or more perfect form, or more beautiful form remains to be studied and sought. Have we not even here an instance of the educative genius of sincere religion, however simple it may be? It certainly insists on "cleanliness." It certainly insists on order. And as matter of fact, and lying in the whole course of the history of the Church for eighteen centuries, how unmistakably and undeniably it has nourished all "things lovely," sights of beauty and sounds of beauty,—postulating and necessitating in turn what underlie *these*, viz. thoughts and feelings of beauty and of truth!

III. THE DISTINCT NOTICE RECORDED OF THE SATISFACTION THE WHOLE PEOPLE EXPERIENCED WHILE THEIR RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL LASTED—some fourteen to fifteen days—AND THEIR GRATEFUL, HAPPY MEMORIES OF IT, ON THE HIGHEST GROUNDS, as they returned and journeyed home. It was no doubt, in countless instances, on countless occasions, true that there was a humble rehearsal of the saying of the two disciples (who had journeyed to Emmaus in the holiest of company, and in the most sacred of religious instruction, and finally service of breaking of bread), "Did not our heart burn within us?" The people now returned to tent and home, "glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the Lord had showed to David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people." There is no higher joy than religious, no better company, and no better cheer of good company.

IV. A FRESH DIVINE VISION GRANTED TO SOLOMON. This vision was granted for the threefold purpose of assuring Solomon: 1. *That his temple-prayer had been heard, and that it should be implicitly and explicitly answered from time to time.* The accepted and hallowed "house of prayer," dedicate now and consecrate, should be a perpetual living oratory. There was everything now about the house and in the house to constitute it fitly such, and it is now written with authority and with promise, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." What a centre of life, of hope, of refuge, for that people unto all generations if they know and remember the day of their merciful visitation! 2. *That the Divine covenant with him should not fail, should never fail, and the Divine promise to him should be established for ever, if he remembered, and remembered to do his part involved in, the covenant.* Here ancestral memories were drawn upon, and brilliant promises of the future were called in, to exercise their powerful influence, and both for the service of offering direction and warning and encouragement. 3. *That exemplary and certain and most notable retribution would be the portion of the nation if they turned away to idolatry.* With simplest grandeur and force is this dread reverse (in a possible, alas! too probable future) announced, if haply the announcement may be an effectual deterrent. The people shall be plucked up by the roots, like plants from the land; the sanctified house shall be repudiated, made a by-word and a proverb, and the very mark of astonishment to all by-passers. It shall excite and awake the wondering questions of many a nation—those questions to receive one simple, faithful, but dreadful answer: "Because they forsook the Lord God . . . and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped and served them."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The Divine approval.* The incident here recorded was one that must have lived for ever in the memory of those who witnessed it. The occasion itself was of surpassing interest; all the accessories were fitted to deepen the impression; and when the miraculous fire came down from heaven upon the altar, there was an event which every present Israelite must have delighted to describe in after-days to those who did not witness it. Its significance was twofold. It was—

I. A MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE AND GLORY. For that fire, and the "glory of the Lord" filling the house of the Lord, spake of the present God and of his glory; and before it the priests retired and the people bowed down in reverential worship, "with their faces to the ground." The scene carries with it a summons to *constant reverence.* 1. Reverence in all worship; for God is as *truly*, though not as *miraculously* and *manifestly*, present in his sanctuary to-day as he was on this "high day" at Jerusalem. 2. Reverence of spirit at all times and everywhere. For may we not say that the whole earth is "the house of the Lord," and that it is filled with his presence and his glory? All the objects of nature that we are looking upon, all the processes of nature that we are watching, all creature life and gladness, attest his presence and his power. "The earth is full of the *goodness* of the Lord," and therefore of the glory of the Lord (Ps. xxxiii. 5 with Exod. xxxiii. 19). Reverently, therefore, should we walk through the world, as those who feel that God is very near us, that we "stand before God," that his hand is working for us in the air and on the earth, that he is *the* One "with whom we have to do" always, in whom everywhere we live and move and have our being.

II. AN ASSURANCE OF THE DIVINE APPROVAL. The descending flame was the surest and strongest possible indication that all the work of the past years had been approved, and that Jehovah accepted the house which had been built as his own. It was right enough, therefore, for the assembled multitude to be not only affected with awe, but to be filled with thankfulness and sacred joy, as they sang, "The Lord is good; his mercy endureth for ever." The approval of God was everything to Israel. It was much, very much indeed, for what it was *in itself;* it was much also as an absolute assurance of national prosperity. Respecting the Divine approval, it: 1. Should be the first object of our heart's desire. For if we do *not* possess the favour of God, our heavenly Father, all other advantages are of little worth, and should wholly fail to satisfy us; while, if we *do* possess his favour, all difficulties, and even all distresses, may be patiently borne and even cheerfully accepted. To be the children and the heirs of God (Rom. viii. 17) is to be and to inherit that which is of transcendent worth. 2. Must be sought in the divinely appointed way; and that is, by the cordial acceptance of his

Son as our Saviour, Lord, and Friend. 3. Will awaken our deepest joy and call forth our most fervent praise. We too shall celebrate the "goodness" and the "mercy" of the Lord; his praise will be continually upon our lips. 4. Must be maintained by faithfulness unto the end. For it is only when we "abide in him," and continue to "keep his commandments," that his love and his joy "abide in us" (John xv. 6—11).—C.

Vers. 4, 5.—*Sacred overflow.* What meant this great slaughter of sheep and oxen? Why such a large, such a lavish expenditure of creature life? With our modern ideas of the sacredness of life, animal as well as human, we naturally inquire what purpose was served by sacrifices on such a scale as this. Clearly it was—

I. NOT IN OBEDIENCE TO A DIVINE COMMAND. There was no precept of the Law applicable to the case; the matter was entirely exceptional, and Solomon was cast on the resources of his own judgment and feeling. A very large part of our service must be spontaneous. We are continually placed in circumstances in which no biblical statute can be quoted. We need to be possessed of such broad and deep religious principles that these will serve us in any position in which we may be placed. It is not a vast array of precepts, but a few inclusive and suggestive principles, which prepare us for the eventualities of our life.

II. NOT TO ENRICH ONE WHO KNOWS NO NECESSITY. Whatever idea the heathen nations around may have had of their sacrifices as an enrichment of their deities, the Israelites had no such vain thought (see Ps. l. 8—13). We cannot enrich by our material presentations One who claims and holds the entire earth as his possession. Yet *is* there that which we can give to God which will, in a true sense, add to his possessions—our hearts and our lives; our own true selves; our trust, our love, our joy in him. May we not say that by the filial response of his children he *is* enriched?

III. NOT TO APPEASE AN INEXORABLE ONE. It might be well enough that the priests of Baal should have recourse to all the arts and devices of a passionate importunity in order to secure his attention and enlist his aid (1 Kings xviii. 26—29). But the Divine Father whom we worship has not to be approached thus in order to be attentive to the voice of our prayer, or in order to grant us his merciful regard. He may, indeed, for a time withhold from us a sense of his favour in order to draw forth our prayer and to deepen our faith, and thus to enlarge and bless us. But as he did not require a vast multitude of beasts to be slain on his altar that his anger might be appeased, so does he not require any multiplied devotions, or incessant entreaties that his forgiving love may be extended to us. On the other hand, he waits to be gracious, and is prepared to go forth to meet the spirit that returns to him. It was, then—

IV. A DESIRE TO RENDER ADDED HONOUR TO THE HOLY AND THE GRACIOUS ONE. 1. Solomon and those who were about him may have been powerfully affected by the near presence of the Holy One of Israel; and they may consequently have been disposed to offer these sacrifices which purified them from all uncleanness and made them less unworthy to stand before him; thus regarded, these lavish offerings were the *overflow of their humility.* We are in no danger of going too far in this direction. We may, indeed, sometimes use language of shame and penitence which is in advance of our inward thought and actual spiritual condition. That is a great mistake. It is not acceptable to God, and it *is* misleading to ourselves. But we are never in danger of having too deep a sense of our own unworthiness; by all means let humility of spirit have free course, both in fact and in expression. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." 2. Solomon and his attendants may have been keenly touched by a sense of God's great and special goodness to them, and they may, therefore, have presented these offerings in gratitude and devotion. They were thus *the overflow of their zeal.* It is right that our zeal in the worship and service of God should be unbound by limits, should be free to utter itself in large and even lavish contributions. We are not to be tied to the tenth of our produce and our income; we may be free and eager to contribute a fifth, a half, two-thirds of all that we possess "for the furtherance of the gospel." We are not limited to one-seventh of our time for devotion, or to any prescribed times in the day for communion with God; we do well to let our hearts ascend in prayer and holy fellowship every day and at all hours of the day. If we have the consciousness of God's abounding kindness, of our Saviour's surpassing love, of the Holy Spirit's grace and patience which we should have, to which we may all of us attain, we shall let there be a glad and generous overflow of offering unto God. We shall let our praise, our contribution, our endeavour, be multiplied. There will be no narrow regulation, but a broad and open spontaneity in our service of Jesus Christ.—C.

Vers. 8—11.—*Sunshine.* A very happy time it was when the temple was opened at Jerusalem. It may be said that the city of God and the people of God dwelt in the sunshine of his presence and his favour. It was a protracted period of sacred joy and gladdening prosperity.

I. Solemnities and festivities are fittingly associated. "At the same time," i.e. in close conjunction with the solemn rites that were observed within the temple, "Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him." The slaying of the devoted animal on the altar and the spreading of the table for a common feast, sacrificial worship and festive delights, went hand in hand. This was quite in keeping with the provision of the Law. And it is in perfect accord with the spirit, the institutions, and the precepts of the gospel. 1. The *spirit* of the gospel enjoins humility before God, and then trust and joy in God. 2. The principal *institution* of the gospel is a common participation at a table—a table at which the living, loving Host meets his friends, welcomes them with joy, and invites them to rejoice in him. 3. The *precept* of the gospel is, "Humble yourselves before God," and "Rejoice in the Lord alway." At our most solemn engagements and in our most sacred hours the note of holy joy should never be absent long; indeed, it should be the prevailing note in Christian service.

II. Sacred joy should be unselfish in its character. These men were glad at heart "for the goodness that the Lord had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people." They were filled with joy because their departed sovereign's deepest desire was fulfilled, and because (they thought) if he were present his heart would be enlarged; they were gladdened because their present king was elated with an honourable pride and a profound satisfaction, and they made his joy their own. Moreover, their patriotism was stirred within them, and they rejoiced because they felt that their nation was now in the sunshine of the Divine favour. It is well to be able to say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow *me;*" it is better to be able to sing, "Surely God is good to *Israel.*" Our piety rises to a higher altitude when concern for ourselves passes into solicitude for the welfare of our fellow-men, when gratitude for personal favours is lost in thankfulness to God for his mercy to our race.

III. Piety is sure to find its way home. The people went back to "their tents" with this abounding exultation. They carried it home; they shared it with those with whom they dwelt; they communicated it to those who could not derive it from the temple-scenes themselves. This is a simple Christian obligation. All that we have from God we should carry home with us; and particularly those inspirations and exaltations which we gain in his house and from his worship we should impart to our kindred and our friends. We are closely related to one another for the express purpose that we may communicate to one another the best and highest that is within us—our purest thoughts, our worthiest feelings, our highest aspirations, our most sacred joys.

IV. Piety and prosperity are very closely allied. It was very *right* that the building of the king's house (ver. 11) should *follow* the erection of the house of the Lord; it was quite natural that the one should lead to the other. We are not surprised to read that in all Solomon's undertakings he "prospered effectively." He was living and labouring in the fear and the love of God; he was walking in the light of God's countenance. While *the* reward of piety is inward and spiritual rather than outward and material—is in peace, hope, rectitude, Christ-likeness of spirit and character rather than in "riches and honour," yet is it true that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is;" it tends constantly to virtue, to prudence, to thrift, to comfort, to prosperity.—C.

Ver. 16.—*The temple, the Temple, and the temples of the Lord.* We are reminded in these words of successive manifestations of the Divine to the children of men. We have first—

I. The temple at Jerusalem. This was for many generations and for many centuries the chosen place and method of Divine manifestation. It was: 1. *The sacred place*, "chosen and sanctified" of God, the recognized spot where God was to be approached, where his presence was markedly and peculiarly felt, where sacrifice and prayer were to be offered to him, and where pardon and grace were to be gained from him. 2. *The place of revelation*, where the nature and the character of the Supreme was to be known, and whence it was to be made known. God's "Name [was to be] there for ever." There he was to be known as the one Divine Spirit, as the Holy One, the Just One, the Merciful One; there he revealed himself in such wise that his worshippers "knew the Lord;" knew him so that they could truly honour him, obediently and acceptably serve him, attain towards his own character and spirit. 3. The place where God manifested himself *in peculiar kindness*. "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." Not, indeed, that this is not applicable, in a very true sense, everywhere. For "the eyes of the Lord are in every place," and there are none of his children or of his creatures in whom he is not interested. But upon his people worshipping him in his house he would look down with peculiar kindness; and towards them, as they reverently and obediently poured forth their praises or brought their grateful offerings, his heart of love would lean.

II. THE ONE GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE, who yet *was* the Temple of the Lord in his day. For Jesus Christ was he in whom and through whom God manifested himself to mankind, in whom he dwelt and from whom his glory shone. 1. Whoso approached him drew nigh to God and stood in the Divine presence. 2. He made known "the Name" of God, for he revealed the Father unto the human race; has caused us all to know and to feel that God is, above everything else, the Divine Father, who cares for all his children, and who, whatever their wanderings may be, earnestly remembers them still and is seeking their return. 3. He was the One toward whom "the eyes and the heart" of God were peculiarly directed, the "beloved Son in whom he was well pleased," and for whose sake his eye of pity and his heart of love are directed to mankind. Not the magnificent Herodian structure on Zion, but that Son of man who often walked about its courts, was the Object in which, in whom, God was to be sought and found.

III. OURSELVES THE TEMPLES OF THE LORD. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" (1 Cor. iii. 16). What Christ was when he was in the world, that we are to be now. He was the Light of the world, and he said to us, "*Ye* are the light of the world;" so he was the temple of God, the One in whom God dwelt, and through whom his Name (his character and his purpose) was made known; and now he charges us to be the "temples of the Holy Ghost;" as men regard us and our life they should be reminded of the Divine, of the truth and the spirit and the character that are of God. We should be living to make God known to all whom we can anywise reach and teach. Upon us his eyes are fixed, and toward us his heart is going in all Divine tenderness and love. We do not fulfil the end of our Christian life except it be true of us that we are the temples of the living God. Not to any sacred place or any consecrated building need men go to find the truth and the Spirit of God; it is (or it should be) enough that they approach the nearest Christian man; they will find what they seek in his words, his bearing, his character, his life.—C.

Vers. 17—22.—*The Divine promise.* This is very large and generous, but it is always conditional. God never makes a promise which is absolutely unconditional. We can readily see that it is morally impossible for him to do so; it would be unrighteous, unwise, and, in the end, unkind so to do. He must and does say, "If . . . then I *will*; if *not* . . . then I *will not*." So was it (or so is it) with—

I. THE ROYAL FAMILY. God's promise to David and to Solomon that the royal house should be established and should continue to reign was conditional on their allegiance to himself (1 Chron. xxii. 13; xxviii. 7): "If thou wilt walk before me," etc. (ver. 17). The melancholy issue proved only too well that there was no possibility of the fulfilment of the hope apart from obedience to the will of God.

II. THE NATION. God's promises to Israel were great, but they were conditional on its fidelity. In this passage the possibility of forfeiture is very fully stated (vers. 19—22). And in the long exile which the Jews suffered in Babylon, and in the terrible dispersion after the destruction of Jerusalem and the extinction of Israel as a nation, we find a fearful fulfilment of the solemn warning of the text. God deals with families and with nations now as he did with his own people. If they walk in truth, in wisdom, in righteousness, in godliness, they are established; but if they depart from faith and purity, they fall. History will furnish ample illustration of the doctrine; the observation of one long life will supply strong corroboration of its truth.

III. THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL. God makes very great promises to us all; they are "exceeding great and precious" (2 Pet. i. 4). They include the forgiveness of sins, restoration to perfect sonship, guidance and provision through all our earthly course, the preservation of our spiritual integrity in trial and temptation, a full response to our prayer and our Christian effort, peace in death, everlasting glory. But not one of these is promised to us irrespective of our attitude or our action. We must repent of our sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we would be forgiven and restored; we must seek first the kingdom of God, and ask honestly and sincerely for Divine help, if we would receive all needful blessings for the life that now is; we must shun the spiritual peril which we are not called upon to face, and strive against the enemy we have to encounter, if we would prevail against our adversaries; we must abide in Christ, if we would bear the fruits of the Spirit of God; we must be prayerful and persevering and devoted, if we would work a good work for our Lord and our race; we must be faithful unto death, if we would wear and win "the crown of life."—C.

Vers. 1—7.—*The acceptance of Solomon's prayer.* I. THE ANSWERING GOD. (Vers. 1, 2.) By himself set forth (Isa. lxv. 24; Jer. xxxiii. 3), by his people recognized (Ps. lxv. 2; xcix. 8; Isa. lviii. 9), and by Christ revealed (Matt. vii. 7—11; xviii. 19; John xvi. 23) as a Hearer of prayer, Jehovah responded to the intercession of Israel's king by a twofold sign. 1. *By fire from heaven.* "The God that answereth by fire," said Elijah upon Carmel, "let him be God" (1 Kings xviii. 24); and in this case "the fire came down from heaven and consumed"—not the people, as it did Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 2), and Azariah's captains with their fifties (2 Kings i. 10, 12, 14), and as James and John wished it to do to the Samaritans (Luke ix. 54): but the sacrifices, as it did with Moses (Lev. ix 24), Gideon (Judg. vi. 21), David (1 Chron. xxi. 26), and Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 38). That this fire was that which symbolized Jehovah's presence at the bush (Exod. iii. 2), on Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 18), at Horeb (1 Kings xix. 12), on the Chebar (Ezek. i. 4), in Babylon (Dan. vii. 9), and now also in the temple, may be assumed. That as a symbol this fire pointed to the holiness and judicial wrath of God against sin seems plausible and indeed probable (see Delitzsch's 'Biblical Psychology,' p. 225, Eng. trans.); if so it becomes apparent, without comment, why the sacrifices and not the people were devoured. The victims on the altars were the people's substitutes, the bearers of the people's sins; hence on them rather than on the people the fire from heaven fell. The consumption of the sacrifices was an intimation that the people were accepted. Or, if fire be taken as the symbol of God's refining and sanctifying power (Kurtz, 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' p. 155, Eng. trans.), the notion is hardly different, since God refines and sanctifies by burning up and destroying (legally by his judicial wrath, and spiritually by his gracious influences within the soul) all that is sinful, and therefore obnoxious to his holiness and justice alike (cf. Heb. xii. 29). So God still accepts the inward spiritual sacrifices of his people by sending down upon them fire from heaven, by annihilating and destroying the sin that attaches to them, through the fire of Christ's Passion, and by refining the hearts that offer them through the fire of his Spirit (Matt. iii. 11). 2. *By the glory-cloud.* This, which appears to have taken possession of the holy of holies, and indeed of the entire shrine immediately on the close of the ceremony of the introduction of the ark (ver. 14), is again said to have filled the house. Not that it had withdrawn from the house and afterwards returned when Solomon had ended his prayer; but merely that the two things are now brought together—the fire upon the altar and the glory in the house as parts of one and the same complex phenomenon, which indicated the acceptance of Solomon's temple and prayer. The heart which God accepts he stills fills with his glory—the glory of his presence as a prayer-hearing, sin forgiving, love-manifesting, holiness-working, glory-preparing God (John xiv. 21, 23; Rom. v. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Col. i. 27; Rev. iii. 20).

II. THE WORSHIPPING PEOPLE. (Ver. 3.) Overawed by the spectacle they beheld, the people adored the presence of their covenant God and condescending King, presenting before him their supplications. 1. *With reverent humility.* "Bowing themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement," as they did in the wilderness when, on Aaron's first offerings being presented, "a fire came out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat" (Lev. ix. 24), and as Moses and Aaron did when the former interceded for the people (Numb. xiv. 5), as the Israelites on Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 39), Christ's disciples on the holy mount (Matt. xvii. 6), and the four and twenty elders of the Apocalyptic vision did (Rev. xi. 16). Humility a foremost characteristic of all who would approach God in prayer (Gen. xviii. 30), or with whom God would dwell (Isa. lvii. 15). 2. *With fervent acclamation.* "Praising the Lord and saying;" for though prayer and praise without audible speech are not impossible (1 Sam. i. 13; Eph. v. 19), when the heart is hot the tongue cannot well be silent (Ps. xxxix. 3). Men that are in earnest, like David, cry and weep in their prayers (Ps. vi. 8; xviii. 6), while in their praises they dance and sing (2 Sam. vi. 14; Ps. lxxi. 22). 3. *With true faith,* recognizing his Divine goodness and believing in the unchangeableness of his mercy (see on vers. 13, 14).

III. THE THANKSGIVING KING. (Vers. 4, 5.) Besides the people, Solomon was specially affected by the great sight. His heart swelled with gratitude, which he expressed: 1. *By sacrifices.* Gratitude which overflows merely in lip-service may well be suspected. The true index of a heart's feeling of indebtedness is its willingness to part with something belonging to itself for the sake of him towards whom the feeling is cherished. Hence the emphasis laid by Old Testament Scripture on the duty of offering the sacrifices of thanksgiving (Ps. l. 14; cvii. 22). 2. *By repeated sacrifices.* Solomon and his subjects had already offered victims on the altar (ver. 6); but these were presented in addition because new mercies had evoked new occasions of thanksgiving. As the saint's gratitude should not be a momentary feeling, cherished for a little season and then dismissed till some more convenient opportunity shall arrive, but a perennial emotion continually welling up within the breast; so should the saint's sacrifices not be occasional acts, but deeds that are constantly being repeated and renewed. 3. *By large sacrifices.* Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep—indeed, so abundant were the victims that the brazen altar was not spacious enough, large as it was (ch. iv. 1), to receive the burnt offerings and the meat offerings and the fat; yet, rather than that any of them should not be presented to the Lord, the pavement in the middle of the court was "hallowed," *i.e.* extemporized into an altar (ver. 7), and the victims slaughtered and burnt thereupon. Solomon had no notion of being stinted in his "givings" to Jehovah. Neither should Christians in their offerings to the God of the Christian Church. The Lord still loveth a cheerful giver (2 Cor. ix. 7), and never fails to reward a liberal giver (2 Cor. ix. 6). 4. *By timely sacrifices.* The king chose the right moment for his offerings—"then" (ver. 4), when his eye was arrested and his heart affected by the sight of the fire and the glory, and by the contemplation of Jehovah's goodness and grace. Had he delayed, the offerings might not have been so numerous as they were, if indeed they had not been omitted altogether. "Strike while the iron is hot" is a proverb applicable to all good resolutions. *Bis dat qui cito dat.* Evil purposes should be delayed till the passions exciting them have cooled; good intentions should be carried through while the spirit glows with the holy enthusiasm that has given them birth.

IV. THE ASSISTING PRIESTS. (Ver. 6.) In addition to the king and commons, the ministers of the sanctuary bore their part in the great act of worship. 1. *The priests waited on their offices,* or stood, in their stations—not according to their divisions (Bertheau), but in their offices (Vulgate); *i.e.* they preserved the ranks and functions which had been assigned them by David (1 Chron. xxiv. 7). They also sounded trumpets before them. 2. *The Levites acted as instrumentalists and singers.* They used the instruments of the song of Jehovah which David had invented and appointed, and with which David himself had praised God by their service, *i.e.* by making use of their playing, as he did when fetching up the ark out of Obed-edom's house (1 Chron. xv. 16—28).

Learn: 1. The certainty that God can answer prayer. 2. The duty of Divine worship. 3. The joyous character of true religion. 4. The necessity of practising Christian liberality.—W.

Vers. 8—11.—*A great festival.* I. THE OCCASION. 1. *The dedication of the altar.* Probably a part is here put for the whole. The writer means by the dedication of the altar the dedication of the whole temple. That this should have been followed by a feast was appropriate, since (1) all labour carried to a successful termination, as the temple had been, is fitted to occasion joy; and (2) the fact that sinful man is permitted to consecrate anything to Jehovah ought ever to excite within the heart glad emotions. 2. *The Feast of Tabernacles.* It would seem that the solemnities connected with the dedication were commenced seven days at least before the fifteenth of Tisri, the date of the Feast of Tabernacles, and that on the fifteenth this latter feast began, and was celebrated with unusual magnificence.

II. THE GUESTS. 1. *Solomon the king.* So is Christ himself ever present at the banquets he provides for his people, whether on earth within the Church militant, or in heaven in the Church triumphant. With reference to the former Christ says, "I will sup with him" (Rev. iii. 16); as regards the latter it is written, "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd" (Rev. vii. 17); "I will drink it," the fruit of the vine, "new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. xxvi. 29). 2. *All Israel with him*, from the entering in of Hamath, the northen boundary of Palestine, to the river of Egypt, its southern limit. So will all the followers of God, the spiritual children and subjects of the heavenly King, be admitted to the banquet of salvation, both here and there—"he with me" (Rev. iii. 16).

III. THE DURATION. Seven days. 1. *Preceded by a seven days' dedication service*, during which the multitudes of victims were slain by the king and the people—not by the priests, who were merely employed in sprinkling the blood upon the altar. 2. *Followed by a solemn assembly on the eighth day*, the last and the great day of the feast (John vii. 37). On the twenty-third day of the seventh month the assembly broke up, and the people returned to their homes.

IV. THE GLADNESS. 1. *Its character.* The people's joy was sincere, deep, and exhilarating. Not only at the termination of the festal season, but throughout its continuance, the celebrants were merry in their hearts. 2. *Its cause.* Different from the mirth which stirred the heart of Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 36), theirs proceeded from a contemplation of Jehovah's goodness to David, who had been the originator of the temple-building scheme, to Solomon, who had carried it out, and to them who were to profit by it.

Learn: 1. That national feastings are as proper to religion as national fastings. 2. That sovereigns and their subjects should at times unite in public expressions of religious feeling. 3. That good rulers are often long remembered by their people. 4. That God's goodness can be displayed to his saints long after they are dead. 5. That the greatest good a king or his people can receive from Heaven is religion, and the means of sustaining and advancing it.—W.

Vers. 12—22.—*A covenant concerning the Church of God.* I. THE PARTIES. 1. *The Lord.* Jehovah, the supreme and self-existent Deity (Exod. iii. 14), the God of nature, who can "shut up heaven," "command the locusts," "send pestilence" (ver. 13), as well as the God of grace, who can hear prayer, forgive sin, and heal not only land, but souls (ver. 14); the God of providence, who can pluck up nations by the roots, and scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth (ver. 20); the God of law and order, who issues statutes and commandments (ver. 19); the God of faithfulness and truth, who both maketh and keepeth covenant with his people (ver. 18); the God of believing families, who, as "the Lord God of their fathers," remembereth them the children for good (ver. 22); the God of justice, who is able to fulfil his threatenings as well as promises (ver. 20); the one living and true God, who will not tolerate the rivalry of such as are no gods (ver. 22). 2. *Solomon the King of Israel.* The prince of peace, the head and representative of his people, their intercessor and mediator, who by sacrifices and supplications interposed between them and the all-glorious Jehovah who dwelt between the cherubim; in this respect a type of Jesus Christ, the heavenly Solomon, the true Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6), the King of Israel *par excellence* (John i. 49), the Head and Representative of the Church of God (Eph. i. 22), the Advocate and Intercessor for his believing people (Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1).

II. THE BASIS. Two acts of grace on the part of Jehovah towards Solomon. 1. The *acceptance of his prayer on behalf of Israel.* "I have heard thy prayer" (ver. 12). On a similar basis Jehovah grounds his covenant with Christ concerning the Church of the New Testament, viz. his acceptance of Christ's mediation and intercession—"Thou art [or, 'this is'] my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17; Mark i. 11; Luke iii. 22); "Father, I know that thou hearest me always" (John xi. 42). 2. *The choice of his temple as a place of sacrifice.* (Ver. 12.) There can be no covenant except on a sacrificial basis (Heb. ix. 16—20). For this reason emphasis was laid upon the choice of the temple as a house of sacrifice. The "house of sacrifice" in the new covenant was the temple of Christ's body (John ii. 21; Heb. x. 19, 20).

III. THE PROMISES. 1. *For the people.* That penitential prayer, accompanied with an earnest seeking of the Divine favour, and a genuine work of reformation among them, should be followed by forgiveness and its attendant signs (ver. 14). 2. *For the temple.* That God's heart should be there perpetually (ver. 16), that his eyes should be open towards it, and his ears attent unto whatever prayer should in future years be made in it (ver. 15). So God still engages to observe every suppliant and hear every prayer made to him in Christ's Name, or with an eye to his atoning sacrifice; because his eyes and his heart are ever on the Son. 3. *For the king.* That God would establish his throne according to the covenant made with David, that the throne of Israel should never want a ruler (ver. 18); always provided that he, the king, followed in the footsteps of David, doing all God commanded him, and observing God's statutes and judgments.

IV. THE THREATENINGS. All covenants have penalties attached to them to be inflicted as alternatives in case the covenanting party or parties fail to implement the condition on which alone the promise or promises can be bestowed (see Gen. ii. 17). Here the penalties for disobedience were explicit, if severe. 1. *For the king.* Failure of the royal line, which would terminate with himself or with a near descendant. This a clear deduction from the terms of the Davidic covenant. 2. *For the people.* Plucking up by the roots from the land of their inheritance, and dispersion among the nations of the earth as a proverb and a byword (ver. 20). 3. *For the temple.* Destruction and desolation, which should make of its lofty walls an astonishment to every one that passeth by.

Learn: 1. That God's promises of grace and salvation are all conditioned by the faith and obedience of those who receive them. 2. That God's threatenings are as certain of fulfilment as his promises. 3. That God's judgments can always vindicate themselves to those who reverently inquire concerning them.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

This interesting historical chapter may very well be described as by Professor Dr. James G. Murphy, in his 'Bible-Class Handbook,' "The Acts of Solomon," or at any rate, some of the miscellaneous acts, for which time was found now that the "two houses" were out of hand.

Ver. 1 (parallel, 1 Kings ix. 10).—**Twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of the Lord, and his own house.** The description is intended to be, what it is, chronologically exact. Four years of Solomon had passed when he began the Lord's house, seven were spent in building it, thirteen in finishing and furnishing it, and in building, finishing, and furnishing the king's house—in all twenty-four years.

Ver. 2.—**The cities which Huram had restored to Solomon.** 1 Kings ix. 11 explains the force of the word "restored" here, telling how it was Hiram had come by "twenty cities in the land of Galilee" by way of payment, or part payment, for the "cedar," "fir," and "gold" which he had given Solomon. It is evident that these cities were in need of repair; possibly they had not been previously in the occupation of the Israelites; if they had been, the transaction was scarcely legitimate on the part of Solomon (Lev. xxv. 12—33), and we may suppose they had become largely deserted when made over to Hiram. It would not, however, be necessary to suppose either that Solomon had given them because they were poor property in his eyes, or that Hiram, whose good will and generous disposition are elsewhere specially notified, had returned them as a thankless gift or as a bad payment, but for the language of vers. 12, 13 (1 Kings ix.), which distinctly tells us that when Hiram inspected them they did "not please him," and that he named them "the land of Cabul" (see Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. p. 237). The probability is that, as cities on the borderland, they were what had been at present unoccupied by Israelites, were all the likelier in bad repair, and, unvalued by Hiram, were, when put into good repair by Solomon, such that Solomon might justly cause the children of Israel to dwell in them.

Ver. 3.—**Hamath-zobah.** Hamath (when the name occurs separately) was a place both of great geographical note (occupying, whether regarded as a larger region or a town, an important position in the northern end of that broad valley of Cœle-Syria which separates Lebanon and Antilebanon, and through which passed the river Orontes) and of great historical note from the time of the Exodus to that of Amos. The town, or city, is to be understood to be the Great Hamath (Amos vi. 2). But the kingdom, or district, or county, was almost conterminous with Cœle-Syria. Zobah, also a portion of Syria, amounted to a small kingdom, and is read of alike in Saul's and in David's times, as in Solomon's time. It probably lay to the north-east of Hamath (1 Sam. xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 3, 7, 8, 10; x. 9, 16, 19; 1 Chron. xviii. 4; xix. 16). But Hamath-zobah of this verse was probably a place called Hamath, in the region of Zobah, in which also two other cities are mentioned, Berothai and Tibhath, or Betah (2 Sam. viii. 8; 1 Chron. xviii. 8). These two kingdoms of Hamath and Zobah, contiguous as they were, seem as though they purposed to compliment one another—Zobah by naming one of its towns Hamath, and *vice versâ*. It is said that the Assyrian inscriptions show that they remained, after Solomon, distinct kingdoms.

Ver. 4.—**Tadmor in the wilderness.** Tadmor, one with the classical Palmyra, lay in the desert of Syria, about half-way between the rivers Orontes and Euphrates, and distant from Damascus about a hundred and forty miles to its east-north-east. Stanley ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 8, note 1) says, "Is it quite certain that 'Tadmor' and 'Palmyra' are words derived from the 'palms'? A palm is in Hebrew *tamar* . . and in Greek . . . *phœnix*." Solomon was probably not the originator, but rather rebuilder, of the place. Its fame was great under Zenobia, the Queen of Odenathus; she was taken captive by the Emperor Aurelian, A.D. 273, when the city was subdued. It is now little better than the haunt of a few Arabs. Splendid ruins remain, specially of the great temple of the sun. The Hebrew text of 1 Kings ix. 18 has apparently *Tamor*, or *Tamar*, and it has been suggested by Movers on that passage that possibly a Tamar in the south, and that is found in the neighbourhood of some of the other places, such as Baalath, Beth-horon, and Gezer, all in the south (Ezek. xlvii. 19; xlviii. 28; ch. xx. 2), is intended. Our text, however, in the present place offers no choice, while that in Kings (compare Chethiv and Keri) is doubtful. And finally, our writer is *here* evidently in the neighbourhood of Hamath, which of course best suits Tadmor. Although there is an apparent disjointedness between this and the parallel, closer notice may rather bring confirmation of substantial agreement between them. For instance, the store cities here spoken of as belonging to Hamath (but not individually named here and not corresponding with those that *are* named in Kings) are accounted for by the words, "and in Lebanon," in 1 Kings ix. 19.

Ver. 5.—**Beth-horon the upper . . . Beth-horon the nether.** The parallel mentions only the latter (1 Kings ix. 17). They were both in Ephraim (1 Chron. vii. 24; Josh. x. 10, 11; xvi. 1—6; xviii. 13, 14), but were assigned to the Kohathite Levites (Josh. xxi. 22; 1 Chron. vi. 68). The name means "the *hollow* place." The upper Beth-horon was about four miles from Gibeon, and the lower about three miles further on. The Roman general Cestius Gallus was defeated here in the last Jewish war; Judas Maccabæus conquered here (1 Macc. iii. 13—25). Other interesting references may be made to 1 Sam. xiii. 18; 1 Kings ix. 7; ch. xxv. 13.

Ver. 6.—**Baalath** (parallel 1 Kings ix. 18). This place belonged to Dan (Josh. xix. 40—45). Nothing is known about it; some take it to be one with Baalah of Josh. xv. 9, 10. **Store cities . . . chariot cities . . . cities of the horsemen** (see ch. xvi. 4; xxxii. 28; 1 Kings iv. 26; ix. 19). In the parallel some of the names of the places built, or rebuilt, or repaired by Solomon in this connection are given as "Millo and the wall of Jerusalem" (Millo's foundations occupied the hollow at the south-west corner of the hill of the temple), "and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer" (1 Kings ix. 15). **All that Solomon desired to build;** *i.e.* for purposes of personal enjoyment or ornament.

Vers. 7—10.—These verses, corresponding very nearly exactly with the parallel (1 Kings ix. 20—23), betray how it was a thing never to be forgotten, if only as a fact, that the extermination of the old possessors of the land had not been entire; so that allusion to it is not omitted even by a post-Captivity compiler. The parallel charitably reads, "whom the children of Israel were not able to destroy utterly," where our text shows with exacter fidelity, **whom the children of Israel consumed not.** The parallel also uses the words, "levy a tribute of *bond-service*," for our more ambiguous **make to pay tribute** (Judg. iii. 1—7). In the words, **until this day,** the copyist, shall we say, too slavish, is again detected (ver. 9). The "levy" in ver. 21 of the parallel probably explains the suddenly mentioned similar language of its fifteenth verse, and again betrays the collected and copied nature of the historic material, the carefulness of sequence not being as observable in selection as might be desired. The distinction between the remnant of aliens and the people of Israel was manifestly that the *menial* and the laborious service was put on the former. Useful but familiar references to this whole subject are found in Judg. i. 21—36; iii. 1—5; 1 Chron. xxii. 2; 1 Kings v. 13—18. For our two hundred and fifty (which gives the number of overseers over Israelites only) the parallel reads, "five hundred and fifty." It will be remembered that an analogous difference occurs between our ch. ii. 18 and 1 Kings v. 16. Whether it were the determining reason or not in these two places, it is very imaginable that it would be of less importance in the ages of the post-Captivity annalist to dwell on the minutiæ of the different treatment of the aliens.

Ver. 11 (parallel, 1 Kings ix. 24).—As the writer of Chronicles has not before alluded to the marriage and the circumstances of it involved in this verse, his account and assignment of Solomon's motive for the removal of his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, is given something more specifically (see 1 Kings iii. 1; vii. 8). The valley of Tyropeum lay between the temple on the eastern hill and Solomon's palace, which was on the western side of it. The name of this wife was probably Psusennes, last of the twenty-first dynasty.

Vers. 12, 13.—Parallel in compressed form 1 Kings ix. 25. After a certain rate every day; Hebrew, וּבִדְבַר־יוֹם; the probable meaning is, *according to the fixed appointment of day after day* (Exod. xxiii. 14; xxix. 23, 38; Numb. xxviii. 3; Deut. xvi. 16).

Ver. 14.—The courses of the priests . . . the Levites to their charges . . . the porters also by their courses at every gate. (For the particulars of this verse, see, with the exposition to them, 1 Chron. xxiv. 1—35; xxv. 1—7; xxvi.; ix. 17—28.) David the man of God. This title occurs only once in 1 Chronicles, viz. xxiii. 14, where it is used of Moses; and six times in 2 Chronicles, viz. here to David; xi. 2, to Shemaiah; three times, xxv. 7, 9, to an unnamed prophet; and once again to Moses, xxx. 16; the expression occurs much more frequently in Kings.

Ver. 15.—Considering the last clause of the previous verse, the king probably designs David, not Solomon. The commandment . . . concerning the treasures. (See, with the exposition, 1 Chron. xxvi. 20—32. Comp. also our ch. xxxv. 3—5.)

Ver. 16.—Was prepared. This is the niph. of כּוּן; and occurs eight times in Chronicles, but in other conjugations forty-two times. The evident signification is, *Thus was all the work of Solomon steadily ordered to the day of foundation of the house . . . and on uninterruptedly till it was finished;* i.e. there was no remitting of diligence and care from the beginning to the end of the grand undertaking. For of this the Chronicle-history has told us, first in ch. ii., and then in ch. iii.—viii.

Ver. 17.—Ezion-geber . . . Eloth. Parallel, 1 Kings ix. 26, which describes the former of these ports as "*beside*" the latter, "on the Red Sea," *i.e.* at the extremity of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, called the Elanitic Gulf by Greeks and Romans, but now the Gulf of Akabah (Numb. xxxiii. 35—37; Deut. ii. 8; 2 Sam. viii. 14; 1 Kings xxii. 48; 2 Kings xiv. 22; xvi. 6; ch. xx. 36, 37). David's conquest of Edom was the occasion of its coming into the possession of Israel.

Ver. 18.—The first impression created on reading this verse no doubt would be that Hiram sent ships to Solomon, at Ezion-geber and Eloth. But it is almost impossible to see how he could do so. The parallel much helps us, by saying that "Solomon made a navy," and Hiram assisted by manning it with competent sailors; he "sent in the navy his servants," etc. (1 Kings ix. 26, 27). Some have suggested that the explanation is that Hiram gave materials, workmen, and models for Solomon's ships, possibly having ships lying in the Red Sea. The parallel, however, meets all difficulties, and saves the necessity of going far for far-fetched explanations. Ophir. This was the name of the son of Joktan (Gen. x. 25—29), who, it is supposed, gave his name to the place or land in the south of Arabia. It is still quite an unsettled question, however, where Ophir was situated, though an Arabian situation is on every account the most probable (see Exposition 1 Chron. xxix. 4; and Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' ii. 637—643). Our four hundred and fifty talents of gold reads in the parallel (1 Kings ix. 28) as "four hundred and twenty."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*The formative influence of the Church.* In the exceeding abundance of suggestion of homiletic matter that characterizes Scripture, and even its historic books, there is naturally so much the less temptation to strain its sacred contents (which at all times serve their own purposes) by laying them under forced contributions to this particular service. It may be, therefore, perhaps best to say at once that this chapter does not proffer anything specially suitable for homiletics proper. None the less is it true that the chapter does exhibit certain points which look this way, and worthy of notice—as, *e.g.*, *once* the central religious institution of the Church and nation has found its settled place and established form, many other things seem even predisposed to seek and to find *their* settlement too, their order, and their abiding strength. The building of cities regained or restored, and the rebuilding, repair, and fortification of others—store cities and chariot cities and horsemen's cities (vers. 1—6, the language of the last of these verses reading, it will be noticed, specially emphatically); the assigning of the payment of tribute to the descendants of the original inhabitants (who, contrary to Divine direction, had not been thoroughly outrooted from the land) whose privileges there, as resident in and amid Israel, were cheaply bought by that tribute; the assigning of independence and posts of authority to others, of the people and officers of Israel itself (vers. 7—10); the apparently growing spiritual perception of Solomon, in what might presumably be regarded as a somewhat critical step, the removing of his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, from an abode that was "sacred," to one that was a palace indeed of palaces, but *not* sacred (ver. 11); the full observance and reviving from Moses' time and standpoint of all religious ritual and ceremony (but supremely of all which concerned the altar) for *daily* service and sacrifice, and sabbath and new moon service and sacrifice, and for those of the triple solemn feasts, to wit, of Unleavened Bread, of Weeks, and of Tabernacles, with the necessary courses of priests, Levites, musicians, and porters;—*all this* came of the "perfecting of the house of the Lord" (vers. 12—16), as though it were actually complementary to it. Does it not read, when all taken together, for the unsophisticated and devout mind, like some forecast of these two things, which we now, in the modern Church, so often say or hear said: 1. That the welfare of the diocese follows its bishop and its cathedral service, taking its tone and deriving no little of its health from them? This is abundantly conspicuous in the history of a newly carved out diocese. 2. And that, one thousand to fifteen hundred years ago, the formative influence of the Church over the nation was indisputable; that the Church made the nation far more than the nation the Church, conspicuously lending to it, nay, giving to it a strength of foundation, variety of elements, and those in especial that make for durableness? Nineteen centuries ago a theocracy, which may with most reverent intention be called comparatively mechanical, passed away. Let us hope, pray, and work that the centuries from then to the present hour may be but superseding it, with that founded on the new and better covenant.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Wise work.* David had done excellent work for his country by uniting all the tribes of Israel in a strong band of attachment to himself, and thus to one another; also in defeating and subjecting the neighbouring powers, and thus giving peace and tranquillity to the nation. Solomon, coming after him, seconded and sustained him, not by acting on the same lines, but by "a new departure." We very often show the truest regard to those who have been before us by illustrating their spirit in a very different method from that which they adopted. Solomon, like the wise man he was, set about building. He "built the house of the Lord and his own house" (ver. 1), taking time and building well. He then built cities, which were either strongholds or emporiums, serving useful purposes in war or in peace. He seems to have accomplished much by so doing.

I. WHAT SOLOMON ACHIEVED BY BUILDING. 1. He increased the security of his dominions. Those "fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars," must have added considerably to the defensive power of Israel. 2. He took effectual means for the enrichment of the country. The "store cities" would do much to promote communication and trade with other states, would increase his imports and exports. 3. He immortalized himself. He caused his name to be associated with many places that for long centuries remembered him as their founder, and with one city (Tadmar) that will never be forgotten. 4. He made a deep mark on the future. Some of these cities have absolutely perished; the ruins of one of them still remain. It is impossible to say *how* much his enterprise had to do, but it certainly had much, with the brilliance, the power, and the political and moral influence of Palmyra. The effects of this building went far beyond the satisfaction of the desire of his heart (ver. 6); they reached to remote centuries, and told upon people that were afar off.

II. WHAT IS OPEN TO US TO ACCOMPLISH. 1. *The structure* it is possible we may raise. This may be a house in the sense of a family (see 2 Sam. vii. 11); or it may be a house in the sense of a business establishment; or it may be a church, wherein God shall be worshipped and his Son exalted for many generations; or it may be a society which shall receive and sustain many hundreds of human hearts. One thing there is we may all be building, and are indeed all bound to build with utmost care—*a human character*; a character which shall be *fair* in its proportions, *rich* in its equipments, and *strong* in its defence against all assault. 2. The moral and spiritual *materials* with which, or of which, we should build. These are uprightness, truth, patience, courage, persistency. 3. The *spirit* in which we should work. This is the spirit of obedience, of resignation, of devotedness; so that we are not seeking our own personal aggrandizement, but the honour of our Divine Lord.—C.

Ver. 11.—*Doubtful marriage alliance.* There was more astuteness than wisdom in the alliance which Solomon effected between the daughter of Pharaoh and himself. It is probable that he congratulated himself greatly thereupon, and that at first it was a source of much gladness of heart to him. But the end did not justify his hope. The political alliance with Egypt, which it was intended to confirm, was very soon broken; in the very next reign the king of that country came up against Jerusalem (ch. xii. 9). And though the daughter of Pharaoh may herself have conformed, in part if not altogether, to the religion of Jehovah, it may be taken for granted that many of her retinue did not; that they brought up from Egypt idolatrous rites, superstitious practices, immoral usages. We gather from the text that Solomon himself felt that there was an unsuitableness and even an impropriety in having such a court in the rooms where David had prayed and sung, beneath the roof under which the ark of God had rested. If he felt thus, we may be sure that there was not a little about the new queen's ways and those of her attendants to scandalize the simple faith and conscientious scruples of the people. And this was the beginning of that departure from the simplicity and purity of Hebrew faith and morals which ended in corruption and disaster (1 Kings xi. 31). This matrimonial alliance was not a fine piece of policy; it was a distinct mistake. Perhaps the king may have begun to think so when he found that, instead of gracing his father's home, his new wife could not take her place there without profaning it. In such alliances as these it is well to remember—

I. THAT APPARENT ADVANTAGES MAY EASILY BE OVERESTIMATED. To the one side or the other, to the husband or the wife, there may be the prospect of social standing, or of wealth, or of personal attraction; there may be the inducement of one or more of those favourable conditions which belong to the lower plane of life. But experience has proved again and again, in so many cases and with such startling and overwhelming power that all may see and know, that these worldly advantages are no security whatever against disappointment, against misery, against melancholy failure. Their worth and virtue only stretch a little way; they do not go to the heart of things; they only touch the outer fortifications, they cannot take the citadel.

II. THAT COMMON PRINCIPLES AND SPIRITUAL AFFINITIES are the true basis on which this alliance should be founded. It is a poor prospect indeed when the wife is felt to be morally unworthy to be mistress of the old home; when it has to be acknowledged that her principles and her practice will dishonour rather than adorn the rooms where the Bible has been accustomed to be read and the praises of Christ to be sung. Surely it is not from fellowship with *her* spirit and not from the influences which will flow from *her* life that a blessing will come to the heart and to the home. It is not the full hand but the pure soul that brings joy and gladness to the hearth. It is a common love for the common Lord, and the walking together along the same path of eternal life, —it is this which has the promise of the future. The splendid palace which Solomon built for Pharaoh's daughter may have been little more than a fine mausoleum for a hope that soon withered and died; the humblest roof that shelters two true, loving, holy hearts will be the home of a happiness which grows and deepens with passing years, with mutual service, and with united efforts to train and bless.—C.

Vers. 12—16.—*Perfecting the sanctuary.* It was indeed a great thing to be able to write that "the house of the Lord was perfected" (ver. 16). Much had to be done, however, before that could be written. It was necessary—

I. THAT THE MATERIAL SHOULD SUBSERVE THE SPIRITUAL. Though the last stone had been carved and carried, and the last piece of furniture placed in its position, though the temple stood and shone before the eyes of Israel in all architectural completeness, yet was it not truly "finished" (ver. 16) until it was made a right use of, until sacrifice smoked on its altar, until "Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the Lord" (ver. 12). No edifice or erection of any kind, no work of art, nothing that is visible and material, can be said to have attained its end as an instrument of worship until it has been the means and medium by which the soul of man ascends to the Spirit of God and makes its offering "unto the Lord." Until that point is reached, it is as the sacrifice without the consuming fire; it is essentially imperfect. It is the wise, the true, the *spiritual* use we make of them that crowns and completes all instrumentalities in the service of God.

II. THAT METHOD BE EMPLOYED AS WELL AS INSPIRATION CALLED FORTH. "After a certain rate every day, according to the commandment" (ver. 13); "according to the order" (ver. 14). It is well, it is needful, to do everything to elicit zeal, to call forth spontaneous service; without this there is no life, and therefore no acceptance with God. But there must be method also. That Christian Church (or that Christian man) that thinks it (he) can dispense with regulation and order in its (his) devotion makes a serious mistake. The waters of a river are more essential than the banks; but the river would do very ill without these—it would soon be lost in diffusion. Piety that is not regulated is liable to be thus lost. Method is far lower down than inspiration, but it is an aid which the strongest and the worthiest can by no means afford to despise or to neglect.

III. THAT ATTENTION BE GIVEN TO THE HUMBLE AND MINUTE. Provision was made for "the courses of the priests;" but the "porters also" were considered and cared for (ver. 14). These humbler ministrants had a part to play, a service to render, as well as the higher officials, and their work was specified and recorded. And all arrangements were made "as the duty of every day required;" regard was had to hourly necessity, and no smallest service was overlooked. In the worship we render and in the work we do for so great a Lord as our God, for so gracious a Master as our Divine Friend and Saviour, there is nothing actually small. One post may be lower than another, one duty may be slighter than another; but everything we do for *him* "that loved us and gave himself for us" is redeemed from insignificance; and if we have the true spirit in us we shall leave nothing of any kind undone which will make the smallest contribution to the perfecting of his service; we shall give heed to the humble and the minute as well as to the lofty and the large.

IV. THAT OFFERING BE PRESENTED TO GOD AS WELL AS BLESSINGS ASKED OF HIM. The priests and the Levites were to "praise" as well as to "minister" (ver. 14). They were to sing as well as to sacrifice, to offer gratitude to God as well as to seek mercy and grace of him. And surely the service of the sanctuary will by no means be perfected until we bring to God the best we have to offer. We seek greatest things of him, let us bring greatest things to him; let us bring to his house and to himself our most reverent thought, our warmest gratitude, our most serious and fixed resolution, our sweetest and purest song. Unto him that loved us we will yield the richest and worthiest offering our heart can render, our voice can raise.—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*Solomon's building operations.* I. PALACE-BUILDING. Like Seti I., Rameses II., and other Pharaohs (Brugsch, 'Egypt,' etc., ii. 14), like Uruk, Khammurabi, and other early Chaldean kings ('Records of the Past,' i. 3; iii. 9), like ancient Oriental monarchs generally, Solomon was a great builder. The first twenty years of his reign were occupied in erecting "palaces," or royal residences. 1. *A house for Jehovah*, the King of kings, *i.e.* the temple on Moriah, which required seven years for erection (1 Kings vi. 37, 38). In according precedence to the temple, Solomon acted both becomingly and rightly. In all undertakings, national, political, social, commercial, as well as individual and religious, not only should God's glory be the governing aim (1 Cor. x. 31), but God's claims should receive the earliest recognition. God first and self second (not *vice versâ*) is the true order, whatever the business in which man engages. "Honour the Lord with the firstfruits of thine increase" (Prov. iii. 9); "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33). A recently published memoir furnishes the following illustration: "'Before we began business,' writes a Christian merchant of his deceased partner, 'we had naturally to arrange articles of partnership. I remember with what earnestness he proposed that we should set aside a certain percentage of our profits for religious and benevolent purposes before any division was made among the partners. His wish was cordially assented to, but the generous purpose originated with him" ('Alexander Balfour: a Memoir,' by R. H. Lundie, M.A., pp. 37, 38). 2. *A house for himself*, Solomon, the King of Israel, the vicegerent and representative of Jehovah in the midst of the theocratic nation (1 Kings vii. 1, 2). Though kings as well as other men may be sinfully prodigal in personal expenditure, in the mansions they dwell in, the luxury they revel in, and the pageantry they appear in, it is nevertheless not demanded by religion either that all should stand upon a level of equality in respect of "manner of life," or that any should practise asceticism. Each station in society has a corresponding "fitness of living," which Christianity allows, and prudence should attempt to discover and maintain. If beggars cannot live in palaces, kings are not expected to dwell in hovels. 3. *A house for the daughter of Pharaoh*, whom Solomon had espoused in the beginning of his reign (1 Kings vii. 8), and had hitherto lodged in the city of David (1 Kings iii. 1) until a permanent abode for her should be erected. This Pharaoh is supposed to have been Pashebensha II., the last of the Tanitic or twenty-first dynasty (Lenormant, Winer, Kleinert in Riehm's 'Handwörterbuch'), though a claim has been advanced for an earlier potentate of that line, either Pashebensha I. or Pinetem II. (Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' p. 331). That he should have given his daughter to Solomon is not surprising when the weakness of the Tanitic dynasty is remembered, and receives confirmation from the fact that an earlier Pharaoh married his daughter Bithia to an ordinary Israelite (1 Chron. iv. 18). As a dowry for his daughter, Gezer (Josh. xii. 22), an old Canaanitish town whose king, Horam, was slain by Joshua (x. 33), without being itself destroyed, and whose inhabitants were not expelled, but only made tributary (Josh. xvi. 10), was conquered by the Egyptian monarch and presented to Solomon. "Sargon (of Assyria) tells us in one of his inscriptions that, having conquered the country of Cilicia with some difficulty, on account of its great natural strength, he made it over to Ambris, King of Tubal, who had married one of his daughters, as the princess's dowry" (Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' p. 331). On first marrying the princess, Solomon lodged her in a separate house in the city of David, until this residence was ready for her reception in connection with his own palace (see homily on ver. 11).

II. CITY-BUILDING. The subsequent years of Solomon's reign were so employed. 1. *Old cities repaired.* (Ver. 2.) In the north-west of Galilee, not far from Tyre. Either they were those Solomon offered to Hiram in payment for the building material, timber and gold, received from him (1 Kings ix. 10—14), and Hiram declined to accept (Keil), as either an insufficient recompense, being in his estimation mean and contemptible, whence he called them *Cabul* (Josephus, viii. 5. 3), or as being unsuitable to the commercial habits of his subjects (Jamieson); or they were towns Hiram gave to Solomon in exchange for those he had obtained from Solomon (Jewish interpreters). That the Chronicler has transformed the statement in Kings, because it seemed to him inconceivable that Solomon should have parted with twenty cities standing on Israelitish soil (Bertheau), while a possible hypothesis, is not demonstrable. These towns Solomon, having first wrested them from the Canaanites, repaired and peopled with the children of Israel, to whom, in virtue of God's promise, they really belonged. 2. *New cities founded.* (1) Tadmor, or Tamar, "a palm tree" (1 Kings ix. 18), in the wilderness, identified with the rich and flourishing city of Palmyra, "the city of palms," in the Syrian desert (Bertheau, Keil, Jamieson), distant "two days' journey from the Upper Syria, and one day's journey from Euphrates, and six long days' journey from Babylon" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 6. 1), and still called by the Damascenes Tadmor (Condor, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 281); though Tamar, mentioned in Ezekiel (xlvii. 19; xlviii. 28) as forming part of the southern boundary of Palestine, has been claimed as the Tadmor here alluded to (Thenius, Bähr, Schrader), on the ground that in 1 Kings ix. 17, 18 the building of Tamar is associated with the building of Gezer, Beth-horon, and Baalath, and that Tamar is stated to have been in the wilderness in the land. But the first of these arguments is not conclusive, while the second has force only if Palestine, and not Hamath, is the land meant. (For a description of Tadmor or Palmyra, see Biblical Cyclopædias.) 3. *Existing cities fortified.* (1) Beth-horon, or "the house of the narrow way," an old double town of Ephraim, said to have been built by Sheerah, a daughter or descendant of Ephraim (1 Chron. vii. 24); but as the two Beth-horons, the present *Beit-ur-el-Foka* and *Tachta* (Robinson), the upper and the lower, situated in the tribe of Ephraim on the borders of Benjamin, existed in the days of Joshua (x. 28), it is probable that Sheerah was "an heiress who had received these places as her inheritance, and caused them to be enlarged by her family" (Keil). Solomon transformed them into garrison cities, with walls, gates, and bars. (2) Baalah, a town in the tribe of Dan (Josh. xix. 44), not far from Beth-horon and Gezer (Josephus), perhaps the modern village *Bel'aîn* (Conder). Though mentioned along with Tadmor, there is no ground for identifying it with Baal-bec or Heliopolis (Ritter and others). This also the king fortified to protect his kingdom against the Philistines. 4. *Store cities, etc., erected.* (1) In Hamath-zobah, which Solomon conquered (ver. 3). This territory comprised the well-known town Hamath on the Orontes, ruled over by Tou, and the adjoining state of Zobah, whose king, Hadar-ezer, David smote when he went to establish his dominion by the river Euphrates (1 Chron. xviii. 3). Both kings appear to have been rendered tributary to the Israelitish throne as the result of that expedition, and their territories practically annexed to the Israelitish dominions under the composite name employed by the Chronicler. (2) In Palestine proper (ver. 6). These "store cities" were not so much depôts of merchandise (Ewald, Jamieson) as magazines for victuals, laid up for the convenience of travellers and their beasts (Bertheau), perhaps also for materials of war to aid in the protection of the empire (Bähr). Along with these were chariot cities (cf. ch. i. 14), and cities for the horsemen, probably not different from the former (see ch. ix. 25; 1 Kings x. 26).

Learn: 1. Kings should be patterns to their subjects of religion and industry. 2. It is legitimate for princes to look well to the safety of their dominions. 3. The best defences for kingdoms are not muniments, but men.—W.

Vers. 7—10.—*The subjects of Solomon.* I. NON-ISRAELITES. 1. *Their nationalities.* Descendants of five of the seven nations in the promised land anterior to the conquest, remnants of which were left instead of being utterly consumed as enjoined by Moses (Deut. vii. 1). (1) The Hittites, sons or descendants of Heth, the second son of Canaan (Gen. x. 15), who in Abraham's time dwelt in and around Hebron (Gen. xxvi. 34), in Moses', along with the Amorites and Jebusites, occupied the mountains of Judah and Ephraim (Numb. xiii. 29), and in Solomon's, resided north of Palestine (1 Kings ix. 20; x. 29; xi. 1; 2 Kings vii. 6). Identified with the Cheta of the Egyptian monuments (Ebers, 'Egypt and the Books of Moses,' pp. 285, 286), and the Chatti of the cuneiform inscriptions (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 107, etc.), they have finally been discovered by Sayce ('Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments,' p. 5) and Brugsch ('Egypt,' etc., i. 338) to be a large and powerful nation "whose two chief seats were at Kadesh on the Orontes, and Carchemish on the Euphrates." Ebers and Schrader doubt whether the northern belonged to the same family as the southern Hittites; but evidence tends to the conclusion that they did. "That the Hittites formed part of the Hyksos forces, and that some of them, instead of entering Egypt, remained behind in Southern Canaan," is confirmed by the statement of Manetho, that Jerusalem was founded by the Hyksos after their expulsion from Egypt, and by that of Ezekiel (xvi. 3) that Jerusalem had a Hittite mother (Sayce). Traces of their existence have been left in two places in Palestine—in *Hattîn*, the old Caphar Hittai of the Talmud, above the Sea of Galilee; and in *Kefr Hatta*, north of Jerusalem (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 235). (2) The Amorites. Mountaineers, as the name imports, found on both sides of the Jordan, from north to south of Palestine, though their principal habitat was the Judæan mountains (Gen. xiv. 13, 17, 24; Numb. xiii. 30; Josh. x. 5), they were among the most powerful of the ancient Canaanitish tribes.

Mamre, an Amorite chieftain, with two brothers, was confederate with Abraham (Gen. xiv. 13). (3) The Perizzites. Either highlanders or dwellers in the hills and woods of Palestine (Josephus), or rustics living in the open country and in villages, as opposed to the Canaanites, who occupied walled towns (Kalisch)—if they were not, rather, a tribe of wandering nomads whose origin is lost in obscurity (Keil)—they were found by Abraham in the centre of Palestine (Gen. xiii. 7), and by Joshua in Lower Galilee (Josh. xvii. 15). A trace of them has been found in the present village of Ferasin, north-west of Shechem (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 235). (4) The Hivites. Translated "villager" (Gesenius), or "midlander" (Ewald), the one of which renderings is as good as the other, since both are conjectural, the Hivite is first heard of in the time of Jacob as a settler near Shechem (Gen. xxxiv. 2), and afterwards in Joshua's day further south at Gibeon (Josh. ix. 1, 7), though Hermon, in the land of Mizpeh (Josh. xi. 3), and Mount Lebanon (Judg. iii. 3) were probably their principal abodes. (5) Jebusites. A primitive branch of the Canaanites, who held the country round Jerusalem as far down as the time of David (2 Sam. v. 6, 7). At the period of the conquest their king was Adonibezek, or "Lord of righteousness" (Josh. x. 1). 2. *Their condition.* Practically bond-servants, paying tribute to Solomon, they had no part in the civil commonwealth or religious theocracy of Israel. They illustrate the relation in which the world's inhabitants stand to the Church. Those have no share in this; yet to this, against their will, they pay tribute and render important service—compelled, not by Christians, but by the King of Christians, who maketh all things on earth subserve the Church according to the counsel of his will (Eph. i. 11, 22; Dan. vii. 14). 3. *Their occupation.* The working-class population of those days, the artisans and labourers, Solomon employed them in the construction of his temple, palaces, and cities, just as the Pharaohs of former times had employed the progenitors of his people in making bricks and erecting store cities in the land of Ham (Exod. i. 11). It was the custom then and long after to subject prisoners of war and the populations of conquered territories to servile work. Thothmes III. of Egypt carried labourers captive to build the temple of his father Amon (Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egyptians,' i. 344: 1878). The employment of foreign captives in such tasks was an ancient practice in Egypt (Brugsch, 'Egypt,' etc., i. 417). An inscription of Esarhaddon states that the custom prevailed in Assyria, he himself saying of his captives from foreign lands, "I caused crowds of them to work in fetters in making brick" ('Records of the Past,' iii. 120). Not even Solomon, and far less the Pharaohs of Egypt or the kings of Assyria, were acquainted with the golden rule.

II. ISRAELITES. 1. *Their ancestry.* Descendants of the twelve tribes, whose heads were the sons of Israel, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, their ancestry was honoured as well as ancient. 2. *Their industry.* The warriors of the kingdom, they did the fighting needful for the empire's protection and extension. Judged by the Christian standard, war is always an evil and often a sin; but in certain stages of civilization it appears to be inevitable, if neither necessary nor excusable. 3. *Their dignity.* From them were chosen the officers of the king's army, the captains of his chariots and of his horsemen, the chiefs of his officers, and the superintendents of his workmen (1 Kings ix. 22).

LESSONS. 1. The sin of slavery. 2. The dignity of labour. 3. The nobility of free men.—W.

Ver. 11.—*The consort of a king.* I. THE QUEEN'S PERSON. The daughter of Pharaoh. As to which Pharaoh, see homily on vers. 1—6. If the Song of Solomon was an epithalamium in honour of his wedding with this lady, her personal attractions, after making allowances for the rhapsody peculiar to a lover and the luxuriance of fancy characteristic of an Oriental, must have been considerable (Cant. i. 8, 10; iv. 1—7; vii. 1—9).

II. THE QUEEN'S CHARACTER. A heathen. However charming externally, there is no reason why her inward graces may not have been attractive. Like Egyptian ladies of rank, she would probably be skilled in needlework, perhaps also in using the spindle and in weaving. But still she was not acquainted with the true religion, being a worshipper of the god Ra, and the other divinities that claimed the homage of her countrymen, rather than of Jehovah the one living and true God. Physical loveliness may be a precious gift of Heaven, and moral sweetness desirable in one who is to be a wife; but nothing can compensate for the absence of religion. "Favour is deceitful," etc. (Prov. xxxi. 30).

III. THE QUEEN'S WEDDING. 1. *Celebrated early in the king's reign* (1 Kings iii. 1), and doubtless with becoming splendour. It is not good for princes any more than for peasants to be alone, and "he that findeth a wife" (provided she be a woman that feareth the Lord) "findeth a good thing" (Prov. xviii. 22). 2. *Politically advantageous for the state,* though this is questionable. Israel required no buttress, either from Egypt or Assyria, so long as she remained true to Jehovah (Isa. xxx. 3; Jer. ii. 18; xlii. 19). In any case, neither political expedience nor social convenience is a proper motive for contracting marriage, which should always be inspired by love between the parties (Eph. v. 25—28). 3. *Possibly against the Law of God.* On the one hand, it is argued (Keil, Bähr) (1) that the Mosaic statute (Exod. xxxiv. 16; Deut. vii. 3) prohibited only marriage with Canaanitish women; (2) that not prohibiting, it may be understood to have allowed, alliance with Egyptian maidens; (3) that such marriages were contemplated by Moses as possible (Deut. xxiii. 7, 8); (4) that Pharaoh's daughter may have become a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and (5) that the marriage is nowhere in Scripture explicitly condemned. On the other hand, it is contended (Adam Clarke) (1) that the principle of the law which forbade marriage with a Canaanitish maiden applied equally to an Egyptian princess, inasmuch as both were foreign or outlandish women; (2) that Pharaoh's daughter is classed with the outlandish women who caused Solomon to sin (1 Kings xi. 1; Neh. xiii. 26); and (3) that there is no proof that Pharaoh's daughter was a proselyte. The affirmative, however, of this last assertion is supposed to be justified by the following considerations: (1) That Solomon, at the commencement of his reign, would hardly have married Pharaoh's daughter had she not been a proselyte, he being at the time a lover of Jehovah and an observer of his ways; (2) that Pharaoh's daughter is not named in ch. xi. among the king's wives who seduced their husband into idolatry; (3) that there is not a trace of Egyptian worship to be found in Israel during this reign; and (4) that the Song of Solomon and the forty-fifth psalm would not have been composed in honour of her wedding, and far less admitted to the canon, had she been an idolatress. But none of these is convincing. (1) Solomon had already an Ammonite wife—Naamah, the mother of Rehoboam (cf. 1 Kings xi. 42 with xiv. 21 and ch. xii. 13): was she a proselyte? (2) Ch. xi. is regarded by some as placing Pharaoh's daughter among the outlandish women who caused Solomon to sin. (3) Egyptian idolatry may have been practised in the queen's house, though not in the land; and (4) it is not certain that either the song or the psalm was written in honour of this lady. To these may be added (5) that, had she been a proselyte, Solomon would not have needed to exclude her from the stronghold of Zion where the ark was, and (6) that Pharaoh's daughter was certainly an outlandish woman. 4. *Extremely unadvised on Solomon's part.* It led to his decline into idolatry, if not directly yet indirectly, by leading him to add more wives and concubines to his harem.

IV. THE QUEEN'S RESIDENCE. 1. *In a separate house in the city of David.* On her wedding, Solomon did not bring her into his father's palace where himself resided—though some hold he did (Bertheau)—but lodged her in a temporary dwelling (Keil, Bähr), assigning as a reason that the rooms of the royal palace had been consecrated and rendered holy by the presence of the ark of Jehovah, and meaning thereby that to have introduced into them an Egyptian queen, even though a proselyte, with probably an establishment of heathen maids, would have been, to say the least, an impropriety. The fact that Solomon could not lodge his wife in his father's house should have made him hesitate as to his marriage. That matrimonial alliance must be doubtful the contemplation of which leads one to apprehend the Divine displeasure, or which one sees to be incongruous with right religious feeling. 2. *In a house contiguous to Solomon's palace.* This house, specially prepared for her, not for a harem (Thenius), formed part of Solomon's own dwelling (1 Kings vii. 8), being situated either behind (Winer) or above (Keil), or perhaps at the side of it.

LESSONS. 1. Marriage is honourable in all (Heb. xiii. 4). 2. The duty of wedding only in the Lord (1 Cor. vii. 39). 3. The sin of polygamy. 4. The obligation of husbands to maintain their wives.—W.

Vers. 12—16.—*The house of the Lord perfected.* I. THE SACRIFICES ARRANGED. (Vers. 12, 13.) 1. *The place on which these should henceforth be offered.* "The altar of Jehovah before the porch." Hitherto Solomon and others had presented burnt offerings before the tabernacle at Gibeon (ch. i. 3) and elsewhere (2 Sam. vi. 13). Henceforth these should be laid upon the brazen altar in the temple court. Solomon's doing so at the close of the dedication service was a formal inauguration of the practice meant to be followed. 2. *The times when these should be offered.* (1) Every day—in the morning and evening sacrifice. So God demands the devotions and spiritual sacrifices of his people at early morn and dewy eve. (2) At special seasons—on the sabbaths, the weekly sabbaths and those occurring in the midst of festivals, as on the great Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 31), and on the first and eighth days of the Feast of Ingathering (Lev. xxiii. 39); on the new moons (1 Sam. xx. 5, 18; 2 Kings iv. 23; Ps. lxxxi. 3; Isa. i. 13, 14; lxvi. 26); and on the solemn feasts three times a year, *i.e.* the Passover, on the fourteenth day of the first month; the Feast of Harvest, or of the Firstfruits, in the beginning of harvest; and the Feast of Ingathering, or the Feast of Tabernacles, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Exod. xxiii. 14—16; Lev. xxiii. 4—44). Other times might be chosen by the worshippper; these the worshipper was not at liberty to neglect. Under Christianity there is an irreducible minimum beneath which one cannot go in serving God and yet claim to be a disciple. 3. *The measure according to which these should be offered.* According to the daily rate prescribed by Moses (Exod. xxiii. 14; Lev. xxiii. 37; Deut. xvi. 16, 17). Though Solomon had been honoured to erect a temple, he did not feel himself at liberty to propound a new ritual, and far less to institute a new religion. For him, as for all before and after, until the fulness of the times, Moses was the sole authority in doctrine and in worship. Since the fulness of the times, Christ, the greater than Moses, is; and will-worship (Col. ii. 23) is as little permissible under the new dispensation as it was under the old.

II. THE PRIESTLY COURSES APPOINTED. (Ver. 14.) 1. *The pattern followed.* The order of David (1 Chron. xxiv.). Whether, in thus arranging the priesthood, David acted under Divine direction or not, is not material. This detail could safely be left to sanctified prudence; and David, in effecting it, only showed his sagacity in knowing how to get a difficult work performed with ease and efficiency, as well as his regard for order and decorum in all things pertaining to the sanctuary. Solomon, in following David's example instead of resorting to new experiments, approved himself wise. 2. *The number of the courses.* Twenty-four (1 Chron. xxiv. 1—19). When these were arranged by David, twenty-four chief men were found who claimed descent from the house of Aaron. Of these, sixteen belonged to the sons of Eleazar, and eight to the sons of Ithamar. Consequently, these were selected as the heads of the several courses, their order of succession being determined by lot—to avoid all ground of complaint on the score of favouritism, and to lend the sanction of Divine authority to the order so established (Prov. xvi. 33). As this arrangement was made in David's old age, and not after the Exile by another than David (De Wette, Herzfeld), it is probable that few important alterations required to be made. 3. *The nature of their services.* To conduct the sacrificial worship of the nation. The Christian Church has only one Priest, who, having once for all offered himself a sacrifice for sin, and having passed within the veil with his own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us, has been consecrated for evermore (Heb. vii. 28; ix. 11, 12; x. 10).

III. THE LEVITES INSTRUCTED. (Ver. 14.) 1. *Their courses.* Three—the Gershonites, the Kohathites, the Merarites, according to the three great families of the sons of Levi; the first two consisting of nine, and the third of six, the three of twenty-four fathers' houses. Hence their courses were probably, like those of the priests', twenty-four in number (Josephus, 'Ant.,' vii. 14. 7). 2. *Their charges.* To praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required. They were no longer needed to carry the tabernacle or any of its vessels for the service thereof, seeing that Jehovah had given rest unto his people, that they might dwell in Jerusalem for ever (1 Chron. xxiii. 24—32; xxv. 1—6).

IV. THE PORTERS STATIONED. (Ver. 14.) 1. *Their courses.* Twenty-four. At least twenty-four men are mentioned as keeping daily guard at the temple gates (1 Chron. xxvi. 13—19); and these, it is conjectured, were the heads of twenty-four divisions. 2. *Their stations.* "At every gate." Every day were planted at the east gate six men; at the north, four; at the south, four; at the storehouses in the vicinity of the south gate, two and two, *i.e.* four; at Parbar towards the west, six; in all, twenty-four at the different gates (1 Chron. xxvi. 17, 18). 3. *Their work.* To keep the gates—esteemed an honourable service, and called ministering in the house of the Lord (1 Chron. xxvi. 12; cf. Ps. lxxxiv. 10).

LESSONS. 1. The necessity and beauty of order in Divine worship. 2. The diversity of offices and gifts in the Church of God. 3. The dignity of even the humblest service in connection with religion.—W.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The first merchant-ships.* I. TO WHOM THEY BELONGED. 1. *Solomon*—who constructed a navy of ships (1 Kings ix. 26). The first mention of ship-building by the Israelites. An advance in civilization, it is doubtful whether this was in harmony with the calling of the Israelites as a theocratic people, whose business it was to keep themselves distinct from other nations. 2. *Hiram*—who sent the Israelitish monarch ships by the hands of his servants. Either Hiram sent to Eloth ship-carpenters, who built ships for Solomon (Bähr), or he built ships at Tyre, and sent them by the hands of sailors to join in Solomon's expedition (Bertheau). If the latter, they must either have rounded the continent of Africa (Bertheau), or been carried by land transport across the Isthmus of Suez (Keil). The former would not have been impossible had the circumnavigation of Africa been at that time known. This, however, is doubtful, as Herodotus (iv. 42) mentions Pharaoh Necho of the twenty-sixth dynasty (B.C. 612) as the first to prove that Africa was entirely surrounded by water, with the exception of the small isthmus connecting it with Asia. This he did by sending Phœnician seamen in ships from the Arabian Gulf to seek their way to Egypt through the Pillars of Hercules and the Mediterranean Sea. Hence the latter method was more probably adopted for conveying Hiram's ships to the Gulf of Arabia—a method of transporting vessels known to the ancients. Herodotus (vii. 24) states that, while Xerxes cut a passage through the Isthmus of Mount Athos, he need not have done so, since without difficulty he might have carried his ships across the land. Thucydides (iv. 8) mentions that in this way the Peloponnesians conveyed eighty ships across the Leucadian isthmus. (For additional examples, see Exposition.)

II. THE PORT WHENCE THEY SAILED. 1. *Ezion-geber*, a camping-station on the desert march of Israel (Numb. xxxiii. 35; Deut. ii. 8); afterwards the place where Jehoshaphat's ships were wrecked (1 Kings xxii. 48). When the town was built is unknown. Its name imports "the backbone of a man" (Gesenius); the Greeks called it Berenice (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 6. 4). 2. *Near Eloth*, the Ailané of Josephus, the Ailath of the Greeks, and the Elana of the Romans, the modern *Akaba*, on the eastern bay of the Gulf of Akabah. Whether Ezion-geber was also on the east side of the gulf or on the west is uncertain, as no trace of it now exists. 3. *On the shore of the Red Sea.* The *Yam Suf* was the eastern arm of the Arabian Gulf, or the Gulf of Akabah. At the present day navigation is perilous in the vicinity of Elath in consequence of the sharp and rocky coast and the easily excited storms. 4. *In the land of Edom.* Mount Seir, Edom, Idumæa, the Mount of Esau (Deut. ii. 5; Joel iii. 19; Isa. xxiv. 5; Obad. 21); in the Assyrian inscriptions, *Udumu* or *Udumi* (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 149); a desolate region extending from the head of the Elanitic Gulf to the foot of the Dead Sea, described by Robinson as "a rolling desert, the surface [of which] was in general loose gravel and stones, everywhere furrowed and torn with the beds of torrents . . . now and then a lone shrub of the ghúdâh [being] almost the only trace of vegetation" ('Biblical Researches,' ii. 502, 551).

III. THE SAILORS BY WHOM THEY WERE MANNED. Servants of Hiram, who had knowledge of the sea. The Phœnicians the earliest navigators of the ocean. An inscription of Queen Hatasu, of the eighteenth Egyptian dynasty, queen regnant first with Thothmes II. and afterwards with Thothmes III., has preserved a record of the construction by that royal lady of a navy on the Red Sea, and of a voyage of discovery to the land of Arabia in vessels manned by Phœnician seamen (Brugsch, 'Egypt,' i. 351, etc.; 'Records of the Past,' x. 11, etc.).

IV. THE COUNTRY TO WHICH THEY STEERED. Ophir. By eminent authorities (Lassen, Ritter, Bertheau) located in India, this gold-producing region was probably in Arabia (Knobel, Keil, Ewald, Bähr)—the land of Pun, to which the ships of Hatasu sailed for costly treasures.

V. THE CARGO WITH WHICH THEY RETURNED. 1. *Gold.* Whether the four hundred and fifty talents were the cargo of one voyage or of all the voyages cannot be determined. Reckoning a talent at £5475 sterling, the amount would be £2,463,750, or nearly two and a half millions. This precious metal was amongst the treasures fetched from the land of Pun by Hatasu's fleet. 2. *Precious stones.* Learnt from a later statement (ch. ix. 10). These also were obtainable in the land of Pun. 3. *Algum trees.* (Ch. ix. 10). What these were is unknown; probably they corresponded with the balsam-wood or "incense trees" brought from Pun by Hatasu's ships. It was manifestly rare and costly, as Solomon made of it "terraces to the house of the Lord and the king's palace, as well as harps and psalteries for singers;" "and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah." So said Hatasu's scribes of her cargo. "Never has such a convoy [been made] like this one by any king since the creation of the world."

Learn: 1. Man's dominion over nature—he can affront the perils of the sea. 2. The advantages (from a secular point of view) of navigation—in increasing the world's wealth and comfort, in extending man's knowledge and power, and in binding the nations into a mutually dependent and helpful brotherhood. 3. The dangers (from a spiritual point of view) of foreign exploration, in fostering the lust of conquest and possession, and in bringing God's people into contact with heathen nations.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

The writer is about to take his leave of Solomon and the glowing memories of his golden reign; and, whether he designed it or not, he has done so in a most dramatically successful manner in this chapter, and especially in the episode, that narrates the ever-memorable visit of the Queen of Sheba, contained in the first twelve verses of this chapter (parallel, 1 Kings x. 1—13).

Ver. 1.—The parallel shows very little variation on this narrative. In its first verse it adds the words (Authorized Version), "concerning the Name of the Lord" (*i.e.* "to the glory of God"), after the words, the fame of Solomon. **Sheba.** This was the name of a descendant of Cush, a Hamite (Gen. x. 7; 1 Chron. i. 9); also of a son of Joktan, a Shemite (Gen. x. 28; 1 Chron. i. 22); also of a son of Jokshan, Abraham's son by Keturah (Gen. xxv. 3; 1 Chron. i. 32). It is quite uncertain who of these constituted, or preponderated in, the country of Sheba here referred to. This is probably Saba, the capital of Yemen, an important province of Arabia, west of the Red Sea, north of the Indian Ocean, and extending upward nearly to Idumæa. The city was reputed splendid, the country wealthy, and long as the most southerly inhabited part of the world. If it were, as is believed, first occupied by Cushites, it was afterwards peopled also by Joktanites and Jokshanites, as above. In addition to the two celebrated allusions to it, ever memorable, see as other references, Job vi. 19; Ps. lxxii. 10, 15; Isa. lx. 6; Jer. vi. 20; Ezek. xxvii. 22, 23; xxxviii. 13; Matt. xii. 42; Luke xi. 31 (see also Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1232). The hard questions consisted in riddles (Judg. xiv. 2) and enigmas and primitive casuistry, in which the Arabians found some considerable portion of their mental gymnastics. These, no doubt, bore some mild cousinly relationship to the proverbs and songs of Solomon, and his treasures of botanical and natural history facts (1 Kings iv. 29—32). **Spices**; Hebrew, בְּשָׂמִים, here as also in the parallel. This word is used twenty-one times, and in a slightly varied form (as in the ninth verse of this same chapter) nine more times. It is almost always translated (Authorized Version) by this same word "spice" or "spices" (except Exod. xxx. 23; ch. xvi. 14; Esth. ii. 12; Isa. iii. 24). There are other Hebrew words for "spices," such as נְכוֹת (Gen. xxxvii. 25; xliii. 11), סַמִּים (Exod. xxx. 7), רֶקַח (Cant. viii. 2; Ezek. xxiv. 10); but the "spice" or "spices" designated by our present word, and the exact name or nature of which cannot be certainly pronounced upon, was in great request for domestic, ecclesiastical, funeral (ch. xvi. 14), and other purposes, and was a chief export from Arabia, Syria, and Persia. **Gold in abundance.** Of course, it is not *necessary* to suppose that the gold that came either now from Sheba, or even from Ophir, was obtained from the immediate region; as seen before, there may have been a special market or emporium for them there. **Precious stones.** These were used for sacred purposes, and for domestic and dress ornaments, and were graven upon in early times by the Hebrews. The chief of those mentioned in the Old Testament are the carbuncle, sardius, topaz (Exod. xxxix. 10; Ezek. xxviii. 13) diamond, emerald, sapphire (Exod. xxxix.

11; Ezek. xxviii. 13), agate, amethyst, ligure (Exod. xxxix. 12), beryl, jasper, onyx (Gen. ii. 12; Exod. xxxix. 6, 13; Ezek. xxviii. 13), ruby (Job xxviii. 18; Prov. iii. 15), chrysolite, chrysoprasus (Ezek. xxviii. 13). The precious stones which the queen brought are likely enough, however, to have comprised other varieties (including the pearl from the Persian Gulf), such as Pliny describes; and see in particular 1 Chron. xxix. 2; Ezek. xxvii. 16; and the art. "Stones, Precious," in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1382. **All that was in her heart.** The expression simply means all that she had so desired to get information upon, since she had heard of the fame of Solomon.

Ver. 2.—Nothing hid from Solomon; *i.e.* nothing obscure to him—no question too knotty for Solomon.

Ver. 4.—The meat of his table (see 1 Kings iv. 22, 23). Translating our thoughts rather violently into modern language, we might picture the queen inspecting the *kitchens* of the palace, and remember that the kitchens of an Oriental court did the work, not of an individual "table," but of those of a very large domestic and official retinue; much more these of Solomon now. Keil and Bertheau, however, with others, refer this expression to the set-out of one meal-table (as *e.g.* that of a modern banquet, wedding breakfast, or the like), where both the abounding lading of the table and the ample variety of the courses, and the rich foreign or home fruits, in season or out of season, and the furnishing and decorating of the table, all come in to add their contribution of effect; and they quote not inaptly our ver. 20, elucidated by 1 Kings x. 21. This was a daily glory with Solomon's palace-establishment. The immediate connection and the contents of this verse, though difficult, favour this direction of explanation, as will be seen in the succeeding clauses. **The sitting of his servants.** The word here used (מוֹשָׁב) occurs forty-three times, and is rendered in the Authorized Version thirty-two of these times as "habitation" or "dwelling." Of the remaining eleven times, one or other of those words would be almost the synonym of the word used, and in every case the rendering "dwelling," if kept to the general idea of a dwelling or resting-place more or less *temporary*, would not be inappropriate or inconsistent with the evident drift of the connection; only here and in the parallel is the inconvenient rendering "sitting" adopted by the Authorized Version. Hence we disagree with Professor Dr. Murphy's explanation, *the sitting*, i.e. "in council of his chief officers." What the nature of the *location* (to use a term least specific) of the servants pointed to here is, nevertheless, still not quite clear. It is evidently placed in some antithesis with the *standing* (i.e. the standing-place) here rendered inadequately or incorrectly, the attendance of his ministers. *The attendance*, i.e. "the station (מַעֲמָד) (see the four other occurrences of this word: 1 Kings x. 5; 1 Chron. xxiii. 28; ch. xxxv. 15; Isa. xxii. 19). *Of his ministers;* Hebrew, מְשָׁרְתָיו, participle of a piel verb, שָׁרֵת. This word, in an amazing majority of the hundred occurrences of it, expresses ministry of *sacred* service of some kind. It may, indeed, be said that the present passage, with only one or two others, are doubtful in this meaning or character of explanation. To our next clause, referring to their apparel, we find in the parallel mention, as here, of the cupbearers, though the matter of *their* apparel is not included as it is here. Part of the difficulty of the verse arises from the consideration that up to this point the contents of the successive clauses of it may compose possibly enough a sharp graphic description of the daily banquet scene. An apt reference to similar description of Arabian banquets is given in the 'Speaker's Commentary' as to be found in vol. ii. pp. 213—215 of 'Ancient Monarchies.' Our next clause, however, brings us back into difficulty by its reference to Solomon's ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord (1 Chron. xxvi. 16 with our Exposition, 'Pulpit Commentary'), apparently so unseasonably; nor are we much helped by reading, with the Septuagint, "the burnt offerings which he offered at the house of the Lord." The obscurity and lack of coherence are not formidable, indeed, and perhaps may be with moderate satisfaction set down again to the account of the occasionally careless selection of the compilers from the material of the older work. Possibly the allusion in our ver. 11 to the *terraces*, or stairs, or highways (see margin) to "the house of the Lord," *and to the king's palace*, may hold some clue to the *ascent* being adverted to here.

Ver. 8.—The abstinence on the part of the queen in her mention of the Lord God of Israel, and of the Lord thy God, of any indication of a desire that he should become her God, is as suggestive as it is noticeable (compare Hiram's language in ch. ii. 12).

Ver. 9.—An hundred and twenty talents of gold. Putting the value of gold at £4 per ounce, the value of one talent would be £5476, making a total of £657,120. Poole makes it £1,250,000; S. Clarke, £720,000. From our vers. 13, 14 we learn that in one year Solomon received 666 talents, beside what merchants brought. **Any such spice.** The parallel has "no more such abundance of spices," and "of spices very great store." The Arabian spices, and their land and even sea borne fragrance, as also the very lucrative trade they created, are often alluded to by historians (see, among many others, Herod., iii. 113; Diod., iii. 46; Strabo, xvi. 4, § 19). Much of all this so-termed *giving* was evidently matter of *exchange*. The queen got *quid pro quo*, while ver. 13 of the parallel (1 Kings x.) seems to speak of the other truer giving.

Vers. 10, 11.—Either these two verses are misplaced (with their parallel, 1 Kings x. 11, 12), or they ought to have, though unstated, some occult bearing on the queen. There are some slight indications pointing to this, and the meaning is perhaps that the terraces, balustrades, stairs (which possibly is the idea in the "ascent," ver. 4), pillars, etc., made of the wood which Hiram's and Solomon's servants *had formerly* brought with gold, were the artificial-work wonders which helped to astound the queen. **Terraces to the house of the Lord, and to the king's palace.** These so rendered *terraces* were probably stairs, and, as already intimated, may have composed the "ascent" (ver. 4), and explain the mention of it in ver. 4. **The algum trees.** This is the Hebrew text order of the *lamed* and *gimel* alphabet characters, as the Authorized Version order in the parallel *almug* is also the order of its Hebrew. The tree is mentioned only six times—three times in Chronicles (ch. ii. 8; ix. 10, 11) and three times in Kings (1 Kings x. 11, 12). Apparently this wood did grow in Lebanon (ch. ii. 8), though we think this not certain. Kimchi thinks it was the bukkum (Arabic word), which Europeans call Brazil wood, and which (Keil) was found in Ethiopia, as well as India. Some think it the sandal-wood of Malabar. Whatever it was, it no doubt was to be purchased at the emporium of Ophir. The intrinsic nature of the wood, and its intrinsically valuable nature, may easily be inferred from its use for the woodwork and sounding-board woodwork of musical instruments like the *harp* and *psaltery*. This fact would much incline to the view that the *red* sandal-wood is what is here called algum. The 'Speaker's Commentary' quotes Max Müller ('Lectures on Language,' 1st series, p. 191) for the statement that the vernacular for this wood in India is *valguka*. **Harps . . . psalteries** (see our Exposition on ch. v. 12, and articles in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' and others. The sentence, **there were none such seen in the land of Judah**, may be read as an indication that they had been part of the exhibition made to the Queen of Sheba.

Ver. 12.—**Beside that which she had brought unto the king.** The parallel has not this obscure clause, but has, "beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty." Professor Dr. Murphy explains our clause as purporting to say this: Solomon gave all the queen's desire in the way of bounty, "beside" all that belonged as an equivalent for "what she had brought." She got so much sheer gift, beside all that, according to the then Eastern custom, was her due.

Ver. 14.—**Beside, etc.** The preposition (מִן) left both here and in the parallel, before the words "men of," etc., in the compound English word chapmen (Authorised Version), shows clearly the construction of this and the following sentence; from the previous verse needs to come the words, after our "beside," "the weight of gold which came," etc. This gold probably came by way of tax payments from the merchant travellers, and as tribute money from the kings of the part of Arabia where the blood was mingled, Jewish and Arabian, and not exclusively and independently Arabian (see the word used in place of our Arabian in the parallel, and Jer. xxv. 24), and from those governors (perhaps in some cases superseding older kings) of adjacent countries, that had become in some part tributary to Solomon. **Governors.** For this unusual and un-Hebrew word (פַּחוֹת), see Ezra v. 6; Hag. i. 1; Neh. v. 14. Gesenius mentions Turkish, Persian, and Sanscrit derivations that would well suit it. It is very noticeable that it is employed also by the writer of Kings. It is used of a ruler in the Assyrian empire (2 Kings xviii. 24; Isa. xxxvi. 9), in the Chaldean (Ezek. xxiii. 6, 23; Jer. li. 23), in the Persian Esth. viii. 9; ix. 3), specially of the Persian governor of Judæa (Hag. i. 1, 14; ii. 2, 21; Neh. v. 14, 18; xii. 26; Mal. i. 8); while Gesenius reads this passage in our present text and its parallel, to speak of governors of *Judæa* (the country). See also 1 Kings xx. 24, where the word is translated (Authorized Version) "captains," and is in the Syrian king's mouth. The word is not used before Kings. It is used by the writer of Kings three times; of Chronicles, once; by Ezra, six times; in Nehemiah, eight times; in Esther, three times; in Daniel, four times; and in the remaining prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Malachi, ten times in all. The Authorized Version, out of the whole number of these occurrences of the word, has rendered it "captains" thirteen times; "deputies," twice; and "governors," twenty times.

Vers. 15, 16.—**Targets . . . shields.** The Authorized Version "target" is unfortunate, though it may with somewhat grim truth represent fact. It was a very large solid shield, originally made of some common material, as basketwork or wood, and covered with leather; *these* with a plate of gold. The absence of the word "shekel" in each clause, both here and in Kings, leaves it open to us to suppose that the *beka*, or *half-shekel*, may be the right word. Now, the *maneh* (see 1 Kings x. 17), or pound, meant 100 bekas, *i.e.* 50 shekels. Thus the targets, or shields, had six manehs of gold to their plating each, and the lesser *bucklers* (as we may perhaps call them) three manehs each. On the estimate that the shekel weighed 9 dwt. 8 gr., since the maneh weighed fifty shekels (100 *bekas*, or half-shekels), the gold to a shield (target) may be put at something over 11 lbs. troy. **The house of the forest of Lebanon;** *i.e.* an armoury (see 1 Kings vii. 2—5; 2 Sam. viii. 7; Cant. iv. 4; Isa. xxii. 8). Shishak took these when he conquered Jerusalem (1 Kings xiv. 26).

Vers. 17—19.—It is not necessary to suppose that the throne was made of solid ivory (Ps. xlv. 9; Amos iii. 15; vi. 4), or that the overlaying gold concealed the ivory, whether more or less of it. The parallel adds that "the top of the throne was round behind" (1 Kings x. 19). Comparing also the two accounts, it would appear that there were twelve lions on each side of the throne, *i.e.* two to each step. When it is said that there were two lions standing by the stays (or, *arms*) on each side of the sitting-place, we may easily imagine, from ancient modelled thrones, that of them the arms were themselves "no small part." It is remarkable that the parallel does not take cognizance of the footstool. The lion is, of course, as natural a symbol as it is an old one of sovereign power and place; and the use of the lion and the number of them, reminding of the tribes of Israel, were specifically justified to the people, whose oracles contained such words as those in Gen. xlix. 9; Numb. xxiii. 24; xxiv. 9. Josephus tells us that a golden bull supported the seat of the throne. If so, it is remarkable that the statement should be omitted in both of our Old Testament narrations. The dimensions of the throne we might have looked for, but they are not given. That they were well proportioned to the height, marked by six steps, may be taken for granted.

Ver. 20.—**The house of the forest of Lebanon.** The circumstance of the vessels of this house being mentioned in such close connection with the drinking-vessels of Solomon, is another indication of the close connection of the buildings themselves (1 Kings vii. 1, 2—5, 6, etc.); also that these "vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon" were (as may be inferred naturally from the connection) like "Solomon's" *drinking*-vessels, infers the use of the apartments of the house for social or, at any rate, state occasions.

Ver. 21.—**To Tarshish.** The parallel has, in both clauses of its verse (1 Kings x. 22), "ships *of* Tarshish." The order of the words in the former clause of our present verse, that compels us to read, "going *to* Tarshish," certifies the correct meaning. The word "Tarshish" (the subsequent *Tartessus*) covered a district in South Spain, as well as named a town and river, and stretched opposite the coast of Africa. Both coasts were beneath Phœnician rule, and a voyage to Tarshish would most naturally mean calling at many a port, and many an African port, from one and another of which all the imports here spoken of would be obtainable. The meaning of the Hebrew root of Tarshish is "to subjugate." The town lay between the two mouths of the river Bætis, now Guadalquiver. Gesenius thinks that the writer of Chronicles says, in ignorance, "*to* Tarshish," and that the ships went *to* Ophir! These passages do not say that the voyage, whatever it was, took three years; much less that that length of time was necessary. Whether voyages were in Solomon's time made *from* the Red Sea, circumnavigating Africa, into the Mediterranean, is not certain. If they were such voyages, taken at a sauntering pace, with calls at many ports and easy-going delays, they may easily have consumed as long a space of time as three years! The theory that Tarshish was Tarsus in Cilicia is easily and conclusively negatived. The names in Hebrew of "ivory, apes, and peacocks" have been said to be of Indian origin. This is far from proved, and, as regards the first two, may be said to be sufficiently disproved. But if it all were so, still the fact that the Hebrew names were of an Indian language derivation would go very short way to prove that the Hebrew people got the things represented by them direct, or at all, from India. Ivory; Hebrew, שֶׁנְהַבִּים. The Authorized Version rendering "ivory" occurs ten times in the Old Testament, having for its original the Hebrew שֵׁן (1 Kings x. 18; xxii. 39; ch. ix. 17; Ps. xlv. 8; Cant. v. 14; vii. 4; Ezek. xxvii. 6, 15; Amos iii. 15; vi. 4). In *all* these cases, two of them being in closest juxtaposition with the present and its parallel occasion, the word speaks of ivory that is being *used*, i.e. as though it were manufactured material or ready for manufacture. But in our passage and its parallel, where the different word given above is found, it is manifest that it speaks of the material, so to say, in the rough, as just "tooth or tusk of ——;" but, further, what the הַבִּים is is not yet ascertained. It is not a word known in the Hebrew vocabulary. Gesenius finds the Sanscrit *ibhas*, which signifies an "elephant;" Canon Rawlinson finds in some Assyrian inscriptions a word *habba*, used of both elephant and camel, but probably having for its generic signification "a great animal;" Keil (on the parallel) finds a Coptic word, *eboy*, the Latin *elephas*, to which he prefixes the Hebrew article ה. The Targum Jonathan shows at once שֵׁן־דְּפִיל. Gesenius, in his

'Thesaurus,' calls also timely attention to Ezek. xxvii. 15, where we read, "They brought thee a present, horns of ivory *and ebony*" (Hebrew, Chethiv, וְהָובְנִים; Keri, קַרְנוֹת שֵׁן וְהָבְנִים). But no use of "ebony" happens to be mentioned in the connection of our present passages or subject. Thus it will be seen that no little ingenuity has been employed to hunt down this little word, though as yet not quite successfully. More may be seen in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' i. 906. **Apes**; Hebrew, קוֹפִים. Conder ('Handbook to the Bible,' 2nd edit., p. 390) says, "This word is identical with the name of the *monkey* in *Tamil*." Keil connects it with the Sanscrit *kapi*, but does not believe, with Gesenius, that the animal came from India, but Ethiopia. In a valuable note in the 'Speaker's Commentary' we read, "It is found" (not stated *where*) "that the word was an Egyptian word, signifying a kind of monkey, in use in the time of Thothmes II., *i.e.* about the time of the Israelites' exodus." (For Herodotus's testimony respecting ivory and apes in North Africa, see his 'Hist.,' iv. 91.) **Peacocks**; Hebrew, תֻּכִּיִּים. Conder ('Handbook to the Bible,' p. 393) says a Tamil word, *tokei*, means "peacock." Keil proposes to consider it one of the later Romans' luxurious delicacies, *aves Numidicæ*, from Tucca, a town in Mauretania or Numidia. Some translate it "guinea-fowl," and some "parrots." The peacock did not belong to Africa, yet still it may have been purchaseable at some port there.

Vers. 22, 23.—**All the kings of the earth**; *i.e.* of the land of tributary sovereignties, from Euphrates to the borders of Egypt, and to the Philistines (1 Kings iv. 21; also note Gen. xv. 18; Exod. xxiii. 31; Numb. xxii. 5; Josh. i. 4; 2 Sam. x. 16).

Ver. 24.—**Every man his present**; Hebrew, מִנְחָתוֹ; which word represents the *tribute*, paid partly in money, partly in kind (2 Sam. viii. 2; 2 Kings xvii. 3, 4; and the parallel). **A rate year by year**; Hebrew, דְּבַר־שָׁנָה; which might be simply rendered, "a yearly thing."

Ver. 25.—**Four thousand stalls.** Not forty thousand, as by error in 1 Kings iv. 26. The parallel mentions one thousand four hundred as the number of the chariots (ch. i. 14). Both agree in twelve thousand as the number of horsemen. Chariot cities (1 Kings ix. 19; ch. i. 14). Some of the horse and chariot depôts were kept near the king, but the rest in those specially chosen and prepared cities, which might be nearest or fittest against time of war-need.

Ver. 27.—The foundations of the evil of exceeding metropolitan centralization were being too surely laid now. **Silver . . . sycomore trees** (see 1 Chron. xxvii. 28; ch. i. 16).

Ver. 28.—The parallel mentions horses from Egypt only, but adds that "linen yarn" was brought. The all lands alluded to with us, would manifestly include Armenia (Ezek. xxvii. 14) and Arabia. The parallel also, in its ver. 29, states the prices of a chariot from Egypt as "six hundred shekels [*qu.* bekas] of silver" (*i.e.* about either £90 or £45); and of a horse for the cavalry, perhaps, not for the chariot, as "one hundred and fifty *shekels* [*qu.* bekas] of silver" (*i.e.* £22 10*s.* or £11 5*s.*, estimating the shekel as worth three shillings with us). Other estimates (see ch. i. 17) would make the prices £70 and £17 (see our Exposition, ch. i. 15—17).

Ver. 29.—**Nathan the prophet . . . Ahijah the Shilonite . . . Iddo the seer.** For these original authorities of the history, see our Introduction (vol. i. p. viii. 2, and p. ix. 3). The present quotation of the name of Ahijah in connection with his work, and the brief allusion to himself in our ch. x. 15, are the only appearances of Ahijah in Chronicles. He and the importance of his work are clear enough from 1 Kings xi. 28—40; xiv. 1—20. As the compiler of Chronicles evidently by a law omits any even reference to the defection of Solomon, it is natural that the name and special ministry of Ahijah should fall into the shade with him. Uniformly it is observable in Chronicles that the *personal* is not enlarged upon where it is not directly and indispensably ancillary to the ecclesiastical and national history. On the other hand, the writer of Kings does not once mention *Iddo the seer*, whereas we read of him again twice in Chronicles (ch. xii. 15; xiii. 22).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—31.—*A study in the matter of fame.* The first twelve verses of this chapter—a chapter which otherwise offers little homiletic matter—put before us a very favourable instance of the legitimate operation of a great force in this world, the force called fame. It may sometimes be more pleasantly viewed under the description and title of an *attraction*, but it is a force under any circumstances, and often a very great one. The instance before us is a "favourable" one, because it is exhibited and it is occupied in matter which we are glad to think of, and to think of as availing itself of whatever advantage may lie within reach. And its "operation" is "legitimate," because there is nothing in the motives and methods brought into play in the effective short history on the page but what we readily sympathize with. These even add interest to the main subject. The instances of the action of fame in unfavourable matter may perhaps seem to preponderate; but perhaps, also, this may rather seem to be the case than really be so. Notice—

I. SOME GENERAL FACTS CHARACTERIZING THE ACTION OF FAME. 1. *It is in fame to travel the longest distances.* 2. *It travels at no appreciable expense.* 3. *The greater distance absolutely lends generally the greater bulk.* 4. *The travel is swift, silent, and very difficult to track.* 5. *It may serve great and useful ends, as in the present instance, and in the greater instance involved in the history of the Wise Men of the East.* 6. *The fame of a person or of some exploit travels and spreads in obedience to what seem to be almost principles in human nature—the love to hear and to tell in proportion to the novelty and the strikingness for any reason of the tidings in question.*

II. THE PARTICULAR FACTS THAT CHARACTERIZED THIS INSTANCE OF FAME. 1. *It was the fame of wisdom.* The picture suggested to our mental vision is most interesting and most unusual. For a moment the Solomon of Scripture is the Socrates of Greece. For great stress is laid on the queen's communing with Solomon of the things in her heart, and questioning him on them. The wonders of human life individually and of human history may have been debated. The casuistry of those days may have been very real and perplexing, even though to our day it should seem trifling and simple. It is emphatically said that the queen laid herself out to prove Solomon with hard questions. 2. *The fame was also that of knowledge and what we might call learning.* Elsewhere we read of Solomon's knowledge of natural history, and of his amazing command by memory of proverbs. 3. *It was the fame of wealth, splendour, magnificence;* and these not lavished altogether upon himself. 4. *And not least, it was the fame of one on whom rested supereminently the blessing of the Lord his God.* The queen, by whatsoever means, and these are not altogether hard to imagine, had learnt of the delight that God took in Solomon and his throne and his people, inextricably and prophetically one. Whether she knew more or less, much or but very, very little, of the relation of earth to heaven, of the dependence of man on God, and of the practice of a reasonable, intelligent, and acceptable worship of him, it is evident that she recognized and rejoiced in the fact that she had come to see a man on whom the Spirit of God rested.

III. THE CHARACTER, AT LEAST IN SOME FEATURES OF IT, ON WHICH THE FAME OF SOLOMON TOOK SUCH EFFECT. 1. *The Queen of Sheba was one of those who have an ear to hear.* This does not mean an ear to hear necessarily everything. It does not mean an ear to hear the loudest sound or the nearest sound. It does mean an ear opened to hear the most important sounds, though they may be very distant, or very high, or from deepest depth. It means a discerning, instinctively selecting, discriminating ear. 2. *She had an earnestly inquiring disposition.* Suggestions are often the best of thoughts, as sketches are often the best of pictures, and as seeds have all growth, flower, fruit, concealed in them. We can follow here the birth from a suggestion of thought, resolve, patient, long expectation, faith in her journey's reward, and all the final realization vouchsafed to her enterprise. How many sounds enter the ear which might well waken us! How many suggestions proffer activity for the powers and fruit for the life within us, and fall like chilled flowers, withered fruit-settings, because of the barren nature, the absolute uninquiringness of our disposition! The best seed asks soil and good soil; the highest thoughts ask prepared minds; and the purest truth, pure hearts. 3. *The queen was willing to expend labour, to endure fatigue, to exercise long patience, in order to satisfy herself as to the trustworthiness and the very facts of the fame of Solomon.* Labour, fatigue, and patience were all worthily encountered. The object was worth them, even though it were no greater and higher than it was. It *was* far greater and higher than the objects which often exert far greater attraction for men, when for them, being things destitute of any heavenward aspect whatsoever, they will rise up early, go to rest late, and eat the bread of sorrow continually. 4. *When the queen had seen and heard Solomon, and had satisfied herself of all, she feels no envy, seeks no points of detraction, suspects no elements of weakness, but gives to all the display her heartiest, most unaffected praise and congratulation.* She can make the prosperity and blessedness of others joy and matter of thanksgiving for her own heart. She can genuinely rejoice with those who rejoice—that rarer thing, even, than to weep with those who weep! And, after bestowing her lavish Eastern gifts, can return to her home, alike wiser and happier. Amid all the dim light of knowledge, and dimmer light of religion, of faith, and of love, we cannot doubt that we have an example in this woman of some of the best qualities possible to human nature; of a large mind, a noble and pure heart, of generous apprehensions of faith and love, and of—in one word—a graciousness that cometh only from above.

IV. THE CHIEF LESSONS OF THIS HISTORY FOR OURSELVES. The history is referred to by our supreme Teacher himself (Matt. xii. 42; Luke xi. 31). His powerful reference to it is to point us to a lesson for good and timely example and imitation. 1. *We are to seek; to seek earnestly; to seek simply, purely, and without envy; to seek with labour and fatigue, with patience and faith, with strong expectation and love unfeigned; and to seek, with full, ungrudging gift, his wisdom, his knowledge, his surpassing and most real splendour, and his solution of all our hard questions.* The very existence of the example declares and pronounces its claim upon us. Its look, its tone, its matter, all speak forth its meaning. 2. But we are pointed, not merely to a kindly lesson and attractive example, but *to a forcible warning.* For if we will not follow, do not follow, the Queen of Sheba, her example will follow us, even to the pursuing of us, to the great judgment! She will condemn us, whose expectation, and effort, and interest, and liberal generosity were all *inflamed* by the fame of Solomon, while all the fame of Christ fails to waken our zeal. Hearts are cold. Effort is feebleness itself, or even as nought. Patience is intolerable. Fatigue cannot be contemplated. Gold must be hoarded, and Christ and heaven must be lost; while she, of dim ages and dim knowledge, and but most broken rays of revelation, shall, *because she used them to the best,* rise up in the judgment and condemn those whose privileges and opportunities were immense, immeasurable! Warning and lesson both are pressed upon us by the "Greater than Solomon," the infinitely greater! Who will not wish to eschew the condemnation of which he is here warned? Who will not be guided and attracted by the lesson which is here offered to him?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—"*Solomon in all his glory.*" Nothing so strikingly illustrated the glory of Solomon as the visit of the Queen of Sheba, coming from "the uttermost parts of the earth to hear his wisdom," conferring great gifts upon him and receiving valuable presents in return (see Matt. xii. 42). We have, among many things—

I. ISRAEL FULFILLING ITS FUNCTION, viz. magnifying the Name of the Lord. One great end, *the* great end of its existence as a nation, was to bear witness to the Name and character of Jehovah. By the wisdom and the energy combined with the piety of Solomon, this was being accomplished. The works of the Lord were known and celebrated even in remotest lands.

II. GOD FULFILLING HIS WORD TO HIS SERVANT SOLOMON. He promised him wealth *and honour*, inasmuch as he had asked for something better than these (see ch. i. 11, 12). In this most gratifying episode Solomon must have felt that the promise made him at Gibeon was graciously redeemed. So shall we find also. To those that seek *first* the kingdom of God he ensures all needful earthly good, and they may count confidently that he will make good his word (see Matt. vi. 33).

III. THE TRUE BLESSEDNESS OF POSSESSION—TO COMMUNICATE. Solomon had great knowledge, large faculty, much penetration, as well as extensive worldly wealth. He probably had some enjoyment in the consciousness of their possession. But he found a better and wiser use of them in communicating to others. When he enlightened the mind (ver. 2) and enriched the hands (ver. 12) of the queen, he was then and thus experiencing the true excellency of possession. It is not as we are able to retain, but as we succeed in employing and in imparting our wealth, whether of truth or treasures, that we are really and truly rich (Acts xx. 35).

IV. THE WORTH OF WISDOM. The queen was no doubt partly prompted by curiosity to see the magnificence of Solomon; but what largely induced her to take that long tedious, expensive journey was her desire to learn what "the wise man" could teach her. She desired "to commune with him of all that was in her heart" (ver. 1), and she did so; and she gathered from him a great store of knowledge and of truth. She doubtless learned for the first time the fundamental truths of religion—perhaps also the elements of pure morality. It is probable that she went back to her own country mentally and even spiritually enriched far beyond her highest expectations. As she crossed the desert a second time she would feel that she had been repaid a thousand times for all her toil and outlay. Wisdom is always worth our purchase, whatever we may expend upon it. "Buy the truth," even though it cost much in travel, in money, in patient laborious study, even in fellowship and friendship. It is well worth while to "sell all that we have" in order to become possessed of "the pearl of great price," heavenly wisdom, the knowledge which is eternal life (Matt. xiii. 46; John xvii. 3). Many earnest pilgrims have traversed land and sea, many anxious students have searched books and inquired of sacred teachers, many hungering and thirsting souls have wrought and wrestled in thought and prayer for many years, that they might find rest in truth, that they might find a home for themselves in the knowledge of the living God. And when they have found what they sought (see Matt. vii. 7, 8), they have gladly and gratefully acknowledged that the blessedness of acquiring heavenly wisdom is a most ample recompense for all they have expended in its pursuit. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; it is the *absolutely incomparable* good (Prov. iii. 15).—C.

Vers. 4—6.—*The unimaginable.* The Queen of Sheba was completely overwhelmed by what she saw at the court of Jerusalem. When she had seen and heard everything there was to see and hear, "there was no more spirit in her." She was "astonished with a great astonishment." She had not credited what she had been told (ver. 6); but she found that there was a great deal more to find than anything that had been described. What she realized altogether surpassed her anticipation. Her experience was very remarkable of its kind, but in this particular it was by no means exceptional. We have much to do with the unimaginable. It meets us or awaits us in—

I. THE MATERIAL CREATION. What wholly unanticipated wonders have been disclosed by the advance of human science! The men of remote generations had not the faintest notion of the powers we have discovered to reside in the material universe. And what still undiscovered forces await our inquiry and investigation as we patiently plod on in the paths of knowledge! Surely one-half hath not been told us or imagined by us.

II. OUR HUMAN EXPERIENCE. We have our expectation concerning the life that is before us; but it is very little like the reality, as experience will prove. Many things we may picture to ourselves which will find no fulfilment; but many other things there are, of which we have no discernment, that will find their place on the page of our biography. Of these some are unexpected sorrows—losses, disappointments, separations, struggles—of which we can form no idea; others are unanticipated blessings—comforts, relationships, joys, triumphs—exceeding and excelling our hopes. We do not anticipate, for good or evil, one-half of the bright or dark reality.

III. THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD. "Eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had it entered into man's heart to conceive" one-half of "what God had prepared for them that love him." No man could or did imagine that such wealth of grace and goodness as that which the gospel of Christ contains would be brought to us by the Anointed of God, would be purchased for us by a Saviour's sacrifice, would be pressed upon us by a heavenly Father's urgent and persistent love.

IV. THE GLORY WHICH IS TO BE REVEALED. In that "land of great distances" we are one day to traverse, in that home of love in which we are soon to dwell, what unimaginable good is in reserve! What joy and what glory; what rest and what activity; what realization and what hope; what knowledge of God and what pursuit of that knowledge; what royalty and what service; what purity and what progress; what unanticipated and inconceivable blessedness to satisfy but not satiate the soul!—C.

Vers. 13—20, 27.—*Gold and silver.* The chronicler who records these events of Solomon's reign dwells upon the abundance of gold and silver as one who takes a delight in his story. And there was something in which to triumph, if not to rejoice; for it spoke of a certain excellency and strength which has its own value. But what was (or is) the value of it? We may consider the extent to which the plentifulness of silver and gold is—

I. A SOURCE OF PRESENT GRATIFICATION. Undoubtedly Solomon, his courtiers, and his subjects did find a pleasure in the fact that all these objects were "of beaten gold," that gold and silver met their eye everywhere. At first that pleasure may have been keen enough. But it was one of those joys that pall and pass with time; familiarity with it made it to lose its charm; it must have become less delightful as it became more common, until it became *literally* true that "it was not anything accounted of" (ver. 20). Splendid surroundings are pleasurable enough at first, but their virtue fades with the passing years and even with the fleeting months; and it is not long before that which seemed so brilliant and promised so much enjoyment is "not accounted of" at all.

II. A LASTING ENRICHMENT. Abundance of material wealth often proves a transient good. In the *nation* it becomes a prey for the spoiler, a temptation to the neighbouring power that can come up with a victorious army and go back with a well-stored treasury (see 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26). In the *man* it often allures the fraudulent adventurer and becomes his possession. No one can be sure that he will hold what he has gained. "Securities" are excellent things in their way, but they go down before some of the forces which no finite power can control.

III. A REAL ENLARGEMENT. Great wealth does not go far to enrich a nation when it does nothing more for it than provide targets and shields, drinking-vessels and ivory thrones overlaid with gold with golden footstools—nothing more than multiply splendours about the royal palace. When it promotes healthful and remunerative activities among the people, when it facilitates and quickens the expenditure of profitable labour in agriculture, in seamanship, in manufacture, in art, in literature, in worship, then it is really and truly serviceable. So with individual men. Wealth that only ministers to luxury does very little good to its owner. But when it enables a man to put forth mental and physical powers that otherwise would slumber for lack of opportunity, when it stimulates to worthy and elevating enterprise, when it opens the door of usefulness and helpfulness, then it is a blessing indeed, a real and true enlargement.

IV. A SPIRITUAL PERIL. Serious and strong indeed are the Master's words (Mark x. 23—25). But they are amply verified by human history, both national and individual. Wealth tends to luxury; luxury to indulgence; indulgence to deterioration; deterioration to ruin. Much gold and silver may be attractive enough; but *they* need to be well fortified with sacred principles who would stand the test of them, and be quite unscathed by them.

V. PICTORIAL OF A WEALTH THAT IS TRUER AND BETTER. It is possible to be endowed with those resources that make rich and that add no sorrow thereto; it is possible to be "rich toward God;" to have treasures within our keeping which the strong thief of time has no power to steal. These are to be had of the ascended Lord. He counsels us to buy of himself "gold tried in the fire, that we may be rich." Of him we may gain the riches of a reverence that ennobles, a faith that saves, a love that blesses and beautifies, a hope that strengthens and sustains, a joy that "satisfies and sanctifies" the soul.—C.

Vers. 21—31.—*Grandeur without godliness.* These words and those that precede them are as suggestive by reason of what is absent from them as by that which is contained in them. They are significant of—

I. GRANDEUR WITHOUT GODLINESS. The historian is drawing his records of the reign of Solomon to a close; and, in taking his view (or his review) of it, he has much to say of the splendours of his throne and of his surroundings; of the multitude of his horses and chariots, with their stalls and stables; of his store of gold and silver; of his apes and peacocks; of his ships and his cedars; but he says nothing of *his service of Jehovah*; nothing of the gratitude he showed to God for the very bountiful blessings he had bestowed upon him, and the high estate to which he had raised him, and the special gifts of mind with which he had endowed him. Here there is a painful absence, a silence that speaks only too forcibly. When Solomon came to review his own life and to examine his own career in the light of early influence and special privilege, he must have felt constrained to be silent, or, if he spoke at all, to use the language of confession. There had been much grandeur but little godliness in his reign. And what had been the proved value of it? 1. The delight it had ministered to him had been of a less noble and less elevating kind, if not actually ignoble and injurious. 2. It had led his mind away from sources of joy which would have been far worthier in themselves and far more beneficial in their influence. 3. It had raised a standard of excellency before the eyes of his subjects which can have had no enlarging and elevating effect upon their minds. 4. It must have awakened the cupidity of surrounding sovereigns and the envy of many among his subjects. 5. It must have been in painful, not to say guilty, contrast with much poverty in many hundreds of Hebrew homes. 6. It entailed a heavy penalty on the people in the shape of burdensome taxes. Grandeur without godliness is a serious sin and a profound mistake. It is as guilty as it is foolish. And so we find the man who "passed all the kings of the earth" in wealth and in a certain order of wisdom (ver. 22), going down into fault and failure because he lost that "fear of God" which *he* ought to have understood was "the beginning of wisdom." Unfaithfulness to the principles he learned in youth sent him down into his grave "prematurely old," his kingdom weakened, his character corrupted, his reputation bearing upon its face a dark and ineffaceable stain. How unspeakably preferable is—

II. SIMPLICITY AND SACRED SERVICE. Rather than have grandeur *without* godliness, who would not live in obscurity with a name that does not travel beyond his "native hills," in a home unfamiliar with ivory and gold, living on homeliest fare and dressed in plainest raiment, *with* the love of the heavenly Father in the heart, the sense of his abiding favour in the soul, Christ's happy and holy service for the heritage of the life, and his nearer presence the promise of the future? Before honour is humility, before grandeur is godliness, before gold and silver is a noble and a useful life.—C.

Vers. 1—12.—*Solomon's queenly visitor.* I. HER JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. (Ver. 1.) 1. *The country whence she came.* Sheba. Not Meroë, or Ethiopia, as Josephus ('Ant.,' viii. 6. 5), Grotius, and others say, following Abyssinian legend; but Sabäa, a country in Arabia Felix. Its capital Sabâ, or Mariaba, still exists under the name Marib, six days east of Sanaa. The district was extremely fertile, and abounded in frankincense, gold, and precious stones (Jer. vi. 20; Ezek. xxvii. 22; Isa. lx. 6; Ps. lxxii. 15). Its inhabitants had become, through extensive commerce, among the most prosperous of Arabian tribes. The caravans of Sheba brought costly products to the markets of the world—to Tyre, Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia (Job vi. 19; Ezek. xxvii. 22). That a high degree of civilization prevailed from an early period in South Arabia is attested, not only by the so-called Himarytic inscriptions found in that region, in which the name Sheba frequently occurs, but by the above-mentioned ruins of Marib, which, according to Arab tradition, was destroyed, probably in the second century after Christ, by the bursting of a great dam in the upper part of the valley (Ritter). Arabian tradition, more communicative than Scripture concerning this queen, names her Balkis, and makes her a wife of Solomon (Koran, 'Sur.,' 27). 2. *The occasion of her journey.* The fame of Solomon. In 1 Kings x. 1 the words, "concerning the Name of Jehovah," are added; but whether inserted by the author of Kings or omitted by the Chronicler cannot be determined. If the latter, they were probably intended to suggest that Solomon's fame rested chiefly on his temple-building for the Name of Jehovah (ch. vi. 10), which showed him to be pre-eminently endowed with wisdom (ch. ii. 12). (For other explanations, see Exposition.) There is reason in the conjecture that Solomon's voyages to Ophir were, in part at least, the means of extending Solomon's fame and bringing it to the ears of the queen. 3. *The object of her visit.* "To prove Solomon with hard questions." It is hardly supposable that the queen simply aimed at a trial of wit between herself and Solomon in propounding riddles, resolving enigmas, and untying word-puzzles, such as, according to Menander and Dius (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 5. 3), Solomon once had with Hiram, and such as in ancient times formed a common pastime with the Arabs. The "hard questions" doubtless related to deep and important problems in religion and life. The serious words addressed by her to Solomon (vers. 7, 8) make this the most plausible hypothesis. Great, rich, cultured, and powerful as she was, she was obviously troubled at heart about the solemn mystery of existence, and wished to have her doubts resolved, her questions answered, and her anxieties allayed by one who seemed specially upraised as an embodiment and teacher of wisdom. 4. *The grandeur of her train.* Attended by "a great company" of followers, courtiers, and servants, as well as by a numerous cavalcade of camels bearing the products of her country—gold, spices, and precious stones—intended for presents to Solomon (cf. Gen. xliii. 11), this royal lady, setting forth in search of wisdom, accomplished her long and painful journey, and eventually reached Jerusalem.

II. HER INTERVIEW WITH SOLOMON. (Vers. 2—8.) 1. *The wisdom she heard.* "Of all that was in her heart she communed with Solomon; and Solomon told her all her questions." If these did not include *gravissimas et sacras quæstiones*, i.e. questions relating to the mysteries of religion and the worship of God, one fails to see why they should exclude these, as has been suggested (Keil). That they concerned not metaphysical problems may be conceded. The story bears upon its surface that the wisdom she chiefly inquired after and Solomon principally discoursed about was that whose beginning is the fear of the Lord, and whose end is the keeping of his commandments (Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7)—that which concerned the dignity and glory of human life, and promoted the attainment of human happiness (Prov. ii. 2—12; iii. 13—18; iv. 5—18; ix. 9—12). But whatever her queries were, they were all answered. None were too abstruse or recondite for this Heaven-endowed king to explain. 2. *The splendour she beheld.* She saw the wisdom of Solomon embodied in his works as well as heard it distilling from his lips. "The house that he had built"—not the temple, but the palace, which had occupied thirteen years in construction, and upon which he had lavished all that the architectural and decorating arts of the time, assisted by his enormous wealth, could procure—this royal residence which, in magnificence, rivalled, if it did not eclipse, the dwelling of Jehovah, was looked upon with wonder and astonishment. In particular she was fascinated by the splendour of the royal table. (1) "The meat of his table," *i.e.* the variety and sumptuousness of the fare, perhaps also including the costliness and beauty of the vessels in which it was served (ver. 20; cf. 1 Kings x. 20); "the sitting of his servants," *i.e.* of his high officials at the royal table (Bertheau, Bähr), or "the places appointed in the palace for the ministers of the king" (Keil); "the attendance of his ministers," either the standing, *i.e.* waiting, of his servants at the table (Bertheau, Bähr), or, as above, the places appointed for them in the palace (Thenius, Keil); the apparel of his attendants, which would no doubt be distinguished for its splendour; "the cupbearers also," whose office was to pour out wine for the king (Gen. xl. 11; Neh. i. 11; Xen., 'Cyrop.,' i. 3, 8, 9), "and their apparel," which would be correspondingly resplendent;—all these left upon her mind an impression, not so much of Solomon's wealth and power as of his transcendent wisdom. A second thing she witnessed confirmed this, viz. (2) the stair which led from the palace to the temple. The old translators (the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the Latin as well as the Greek) thought the words in the Hebrew referred to the burnt offerings which he offered in the house of Jehovah—an opinion in which they have been followed by some modern interpreters (Luther, A. Clarke, Bertheau). These, however, he would hardly have shown to one not a proselyte. Besides, had she beheld the magnificence of the temple service, some allusion to this in her address to Solomon would most likely have appeared. Hence the opinion is to be preferred that the reference is to the arched viaduct which led from his palace to the temple (Keil, Bähr, Winer, Ewald, Jamieson), the remains of which, recently discovered, show it to have been, "for boldness of conception, for structure and magnificence, one of the greatest wonders in Jerusalem." That such a communication between the palace on Zion and the temple on Moriah existed seems hinted at in 2 Kings xvi. 18 and in ch. xxiii. 20; while Josephus speaks of a passage from the temple to the king's palace which led over the intermediate valley ('Ant.,' xv. 11. 5). If the ruins described by Robinson are those of this bridge, it must have contained five arches, each sixty feet wide and a hundred and thirty feet high. "The whole structure," says Isaac Taylor, "when seen from the southern extremity of the Tyropœon, must have had an aspect of grandeur, especially as connected with the lofty and sumptuous edifices of the temple and of Zion to the right and to the left" (quoted by Jamieson, *in loc.*). 3. *The admiration she felt.* Sincere and intense. Solomon's wisdom had been (1) in complete accordance with the report she had heard of it in her own country (ver. 5)—rumour had not lied; (2) it had equalled her expectations—fancy had not deceived; (3) it had far exceeded both the report of it and her own expectations regarding it (ver. 6)—her sense of wonder was more than satisfied; (4) it was so overpowering that it left no spirit in her (ver. 4)—her hope of rivalling it was gone. 4. *The sentiments she expressed.* (1) She pronounced happy Solomon's courtiers and attendants because of their proximity to his throne and person, which enabled them to hear his wisdom. In so doing she took for granted both that Solomon would never discourse otherwise than wisely, and that Solomon's servants and ministers would always feel disposed to listen to and profit by their master's speech; in both of which she reckoned before the mark. (2) She praised Jehovah for his goodness to Solomon in giving him such a throne, *i.e.* for making Solomon his vicegerent in Israel, and for his favour to Israel in furnishing them with such a king—in her eyes a proof that Jehovah loved them and purposed to establish them for ever (ver. 8). In neither of these utterances did she err. Stable thrones and good kings are of God's making. (3) She instructed Solomon as to the kingly work such a one as he was raised up to do, viz. to execute judgment and justice (Ps. lxxii. 2). If from these utterances it cannot be inferred that she was either assisted by inspiration or converted to Jehovah's religion, it is open to conclude she was a deeply reflecting and far-seeing woman, second only to Solomon in wisdom and sagacity. 5. *The presents she made.* (1) "A hundred and twenty talents of gold"—equivalent to £657,000, valuing the talent at £5475. (2) "Spices in great abundance," and of unsurpassed excellence, the principal of which was probably the Arabic balsam Josephus ('Ant.,' viii. 6. 6) says his countrymen derived from this queen. (3) "Precious stones," the names unknown. 6. *The gifts she received.* Besides the solution of her questions, she obtained handsome and valuable presents from Solomon, partly in compliance with her own request (ver. 12), partly in payment of the costly gifts brought to him by her, and partly over and above out of his own royal liberality (1 Kings x. 13).

III. HER RETURN TO SHEBA. (Ver. 12.) 1. *The termination of her visit.* How long this visit continued is not recorded, but at length the queen departed on her homeward journey, attended by her servants and accompanied by her train of camels. 2. *The spoils of her visit.* Besides carrying home the presents given by Solomon, she bore with her, what was of greater moment for herself and her subjects, the impressions she had received upon her travels and the lessons of earthly and heavenly wisdom she had derived from her interview with the king. 3. *The historicity of her visit.* That the preceding narrative is no fable is guaranteed by Christ's use of it in the First Gospel (Matt. xii. 42), and by recent archæological research (see 'Ancient Arabia,' by Professor Sayce, in *Contemporary Review*, December, 1889).

LESSONS. 1. The privilege of Christians in having as King a greater than Solomon—him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). 2. The obligation of the world to hear the wisdom of him who, besides being greater, is also nearer to them than was he to the Queen of Sheba (Matt. xii. 42). 3. The blessedness of such as hear Christ's wisdom, waiting at his throne and standing in his presence, first on earth and afterwards in heaven (Prov. viii. 34). 4. The certainty that Christ will give to them who seek his wisdom all that they ask and more of his royal bounty (Eph. iii. 17). 5. The duty of those who come to know Christ's wisdom to carry the tidings of it back to their own country (Matt. v. 19, 20).—W.

Vers. 13—31.—*The glory of Solomon.* I. THE VASTNESS OF HIS WEALTH. (Vers. 13, 14, 21, 24.) 1. *Its sources.* (1) The contributions of merchants and traders towards the imperial revenues (ver. 14); (2) the presents of kings and governors in Arabia and elsewhere; and (3) the cargoes brought by his fleets from Ophir yearly (ver. 10), and from Tartessus, or Tarsus, in Spain, every three years (ver. 21). 2. *Its amount.* 666 talents of gold per annum, not reckoning the silver as abundant as stones (ver. 27). Estimating a talent at £5475 sterling, the gold would reach the immense total of £3,646,350 sterling per annum. 3. *Its use.* It was employed: (1) In making state shields—200 larger, to each of which 600 shekels of gold were devoted; and 300 smaller, to each of which 300 shekels were assigned. The shields, probably made of wood and covered with gold instead of leather, were hung in Solomon's palace, "the house of the forest of Lebanon" (1 Kings vii. 2), where they remained until plundered by Shishak (ch. xii. 9; 1 Kings xiv. 26). (2) In fashioning a state throne, made of ivory and overlaid with pure gold (ver. 17); *i.e.* the woodwork, not the ivory, was covered with the metal. The throne had six steps and a golden footstool (ver. 18); each step had on either side a lion, probably of cast metal gilded. On each side of the seat was an arm or stay, beside which sat another lion. Thus there were in all fourteen gilt lions. No wonder the historian adds, "there was nothing like it in any kingdom." Yet many modern thrones surpass it in splendour. (3) In constructing state cups or drinking-vessels for the palace. All were made of pure gold—gold of Ophir, Tarshish, or Parvaim; "not one of silver, which was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon." 4. Its *credibility.* The above account is rendered trustworthy by comparing it with well-known recorded facts. "When Nineveh was besieged, Sardanapalus had 150 golden bedsteads, 150 golden tables, 1,000,000 talents of gold, ten times as much silver, while 3000 talents had been previously distributed among his sons. No less than 7170 talents of gold were used for the statues and vessels of the temple of Bel in Babylon. Alexander's pillage of Ecbatana was valued at 120,000 talents of gold; Cyrus's pillage was 34,000 pounds of gold and 500,000 pounds of silver, besides an immense number of golden vessels" (Bähr, *in loco*, Lange's series).

II. THE EXCELLENCE OF HIS WISDOM. (Vers. 22, 23.) Solomon's wisdom was excellent in respect of: 1. *Origin.* It was God-inspired. All wisdom proceeds from the same source (Job xxxii. 8), and "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven" (John iii. 27); but in Solomon's case wisdom was a special endowment (ch. i. 12). 2. *Measure.* Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in the quantity as well as quality of his wisdom—not easy to do. The Queen of Sheba was a proof that royal personages in that era were not fools; while the monumental histories of Egypt and Assyria have revealed the existence of wise and powerful princes long before Solomon. There were brave men before Agamemnon. 3. *Manifestation.* Solomon's wisdom expressed itself in a variety of ways: in temple-building and other architectural undertakings; in the pronouncing of judgments and the utterance of apothegms; in the acquisition of knowledge, and more especially of natural history; and in literary compositions both prosaic and poetical (1 Kings iv. 29—33). 4. *Fame.* It spread abroad through all countries, and attracted kings and queens to his court to hear his oracular utterances and make trial of his insight, as well as to gaze upon the splendour of his court and the magnificence of his person (1 Kings iv. 34).

III. THE EXTENT OF HIS EMPIRE. (Ver. 26.) 1. Its *eastern* boundary—the Syrian desert, in which Tadmor or Palmyra was situated. 2. Its *western*—the Mediterranean or, more correctly, Phœnicia and the country of the Philistines, with the strip of Mediterranean coast between. 3. Its *northern*—the river—the Euphrates, in its upper reaches, from Tiphsah, or Thapsacus, a large and populous town on the west bank, a place where armies crossed over the stream, and where was a quay for landing and shipping wares coming from or going to Babylon (Winer, ii. p. 612). 4. Its *southern*—the border of Egypt (1 Kings iv. 24). Within these limits he either exercised sovereign power directly, as over his own subjects in Palestine, or indirectly through receiving tribute from the reigning kings who expressed their fealty to him by bringing, year by year, every man his present—vessels of silver and vessels of gold and raiment, harness and spices, horses and mules (ver. 24).

IV. THE DURATION OF HIS REIGN. (Ver. 30.) Forty years. 1. *A great privilege.* Long life a mark of special favour under the old dispensation (Prov. iii. 16); under the new, a valuable blessing to those who enjoy it (Eph. vi. 2). 2. *A large opportunity.* Life not for personal enjoyment merely, but for religious and philanthropic activity. A long life means a long time for doing good. What benefits Solomon might have conferred upon his people during that extended period! 3. *A high responsibility.* "To whomsoever much is given," etc. That Solomon did less than he might with his great wisdom, vast riches, immense power, extended fame, and protracted life, entailed upon him deeper guilt. 4. *An evident mercy.* Considering the bad use Solomon made of his numerous years, declining in his old age through love of women into debasing idolatries (1 Kings xi. 1—8), it was a proof of the Divine patience and long-suffering that he was not earlier cut off.

V. THE CLOSE OF HIS CAREER. (Vers. 29, 31.) 1. *His biography was written by* *the hand of prophets.* (Ver. 29.) Nathan the prophet, who had announced his birth to David (2 Sam. vii. 12—14; 1 Chron. xvii. 11), and who had called him, when a child, Jedidiah, "Beloved of the Lord" (2 Sam. xii. 25), in all probability began it; Ahijah the Shilonite (*i.e.* inhabitant of, or prophet from, Shilo, an Ephraimite town), who predicted the division of the kingdom (1 Kings xi. 29), it may be supposed, carried it on; and Iddo the seer, a contemporary of Rehoboam and Jeroboam (ch. xii. 15 and xiii. 22), finished it. Being prophets of the Lord, these writers would "nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice," but would deliver "a plain unvarnished tale" of the great monarch's acts and words, of his wise speeches and foolish deeds. 2. *His corpse was buried in the tomb of his father.* (Ver. 31.) It was well that he had a tomb to lie in; better men than he have had none. He had sat upon his father's throne, worn his father's crown, extended his father's kingdom, improved upon his father's vices, declined from his father's piety; now his lifeless dust was consigned to rest in his father's sepulchre. 3. *His throne was filled by his own son.* No man likes to be succeeded by a stranger. It must have been a comfort to the old monarch that Rehoboam was to wear his crown.

Learn: 1. The vanity of earthly glory—the magnificence of Solomon unequal to the raiment of a lily (Matt. vi. 29). 2. The worthlessness of all earthly things without religion: Solomon had everything that could satisfy ambition, and yet he declined from the worship of Jehovah (Matt. xix. 20). 3. The certainty of death: if a Solomon could not evade the king of terrors, how shall common men? (Eccles. viii. 8).—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter begins the fourth and last great division of the work once called in its unity, "The Chronicles." This fourth and last division, therefore, will see us to the end of our ch. xxxvi., where we find, by an historical anticipation of above fifty years, the memorable proclamation of Cyrus, which authorized the return of the captive Jews, and sanctioned the rebuilding of the temple. This stretch of history, divided in our Authorized Version into twenty-seven chapters, covers, therefore, a period of about four hundred and fifty years; it ignores almost totally the career of Israel, and, in clearest accord with its *post*-captive and *prophetic* objects, abides uninterruptedly by that of the sacred dynasty of Judah. The kings are in number twenty, beginning with Rehoboam, ending with Zedekiah, of whom, however, the last four can be credited with but little semblance of independent authority, for they were the alternate vassals of the rival and antagonistic powers of Egypt and Assyria. The longest reigns of the twenty were those of Manasseh (fifty-five years, B.C. 697—642); of Uzziah or Azariah (fifty-one years, B.C. 809—758); of Asa (forty-one years, B.C. 959—918); of Jehoash (forty years, B.C. 878—838); of Josiah (thirty-one years, B.C. 640—609); of Hezekiah (twenty-nine years, B.C. 726—697); of Amaziah (twenty-nine years, B.C. 838—809); of Jehoshaphat (twenty-five years, B.C. 918—893); and of Rehoboam (seventeen years, B.C. 979—962). The last of the mournful procession was Zedekiah, who was mocked with the title for eleven years (B.C. 598—587). In the dates of this chronology, though slight differences are found, there is little room for variation when once the initial and, in consequence, final dates are fixed. The line of succession is hereditary throughout, and almost entirely of strict lineal descent, *i.e.* from father to son, if we except, *first*, the interruption caused by the Queen Athaliah, mother of her predecessor Ahaziah; *secondly*, Joash, her grandson and successor, who was son of Ahaziah; *thirdly*, Jehoiachim (so named by the King of Egypt, but formerly named Eliakim), who was brother of his predecessor Jehoahaz; and, *fourthly*, Zedekiah (or Mattaniah), who was the paternal uncle (2 Kings xxiv. 17) of his predecessor Jehoiachin, and who was put on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, against whom he in due time rose in rebellion, and by whom he was sent captive to Babylon, after seeing his sons slain, and having thereupon his own eyes put out. After him there was no more a king in Judah. It will be obvious that, if the years marking the duration of the succeeding reigns be summed up, we shall obtain too large a result, as they often or always overlapped one another, and, of course, did not fall into exact years. The initial date we take as B.C. 979, and the final date at the end of Zedekiah's eleven years, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem, as B.C. 587. Some chronologies quote these dates, however, B.C. 975—588. Side by side with these preliminary notes respecting Judah, it may be stated that the initial and final dates for the separate kingdom of the ten tribes, Israel, with their nineteen kings, were B.C. 979 (975) to the date of Samaria taken, B.C. 719, or (as some would date the overthrow of Israel) B.C. 722 or 721. It need scarcely be said that, if forty years are added for the reign of Solomon, and forty years for that of David, we shall be conducted to the date of either B.C. 1059 or 1055 as the beginning of the Davidic royal line, and may count the duration of that royal line as numbering about 472 years. An interesting table, showing some slight differences of date, may be found in pp. 53, 54 of the second edition of Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible.'

The verses of this chapter, nineteen in number, correspond with those of 1 Kings xii. 1—19. They so correspond as to convince us that both writers took from one original, or, at any rate, one former source. But they are particularly instructive also in another direction. Our vers. 2 and 3 are in order, and quite intelligible. Vers. 2 and 3 of the parallel are not so, and convince us either that the carelessness of copyists was more than usual (even when our Authorized Version "of it" is cancelled) or, which is a by far less acceptable supposition, that the carelessness of the compiler or writer was great. Though these two lengths of nineteen verses each so closely correspond as to show both indebted to one former source, they also evince clearly that neither writer absolutely bound himself by the exact words of his pattern, but took the meaning, and slightly altered, so to say, grammar and syntax of sentences.

Ver. 1.—This verse would have been far better placed last in the previous chapter, but now, left without note of time, it purports to tell us that (whereas by the last clause of the previous chapter "Rehoboam reigned in his" father Solomon's "stead," and had been *presumably* accepted as his heir and successor in Jerusalem and all Judæa) Rehoboam, now somewhat later on, repairs to Shechem (the ancient capital, and the prized position of the high-spirited tribe of Ephraim) to receive some final recognition as king from "all Israel." **Rehoboam.** Solomon's son by Naamah, an Ammonite princess (1 Kings xiv. 21, 31). *Eurydemus* may be considered as a close reproduction in Greek of the Hebrew name Rehoboam. To his son Abijah, by his favourite wife Maachah, who was the third of the wives that belonged to the house of Jesse, he bequeathed the kingdom. Wanting any positive Scripture statement of the matter of Rehoboam going to Shechem, we believe the explanation given above is the most probable, and that it was not any designed stroke of policy, with the view of conciliating or flattering Ephraim. Though no formal statement of it be made here, yet it is quite intelligible that the opinions, feelings, and readiness to express them on the part of Ephraim and "Israel" were well enough known, and had to be reckoned for. **Shechem.** For many reasons one of the most interesting geographical names in all the Old Testament. It was the ancient capital, as Shiloh, near to it, was the ancient seat of the national worship. It was situate in Ephraim, with Ebal to the immediate north, and Gerizim to the immediate south. Its upper slopelands (its position on which is possibly the origin of the name, שְׁכֶם, "a shoulder") commanded a view of the Mediterranean. It was the half-way resting-place, at the end of the second day's journey, for travellers from Galilee to Jerusalem, and hence bore the name in later times, it is thought, of Mabortha, or Mabartha (מַעְבַּרְתָּא), Pliny's Mamortha. Vespasian subsequently named it Neapolis, the modern Nablous. The Authorized Version synonyms of Shechem appear as *Sichem*, *Sychem*, *Sychar* (John iv. 5, 20). In post-Captivity times, a new temple on Gerizim was the cathedral of Samaritan worship, which was levelled by John Hyrcanus, B.C. 129. Jacob's well is a half-mile south-east, and Joseph's tomb two miles east (Josh. xxiv. 32). Almost every one of the references to Shechem are of great interest on one account or another, and to turn to each of them in order is to read the Scripture narrative of the place. The leading references are subjoined (Gen. xii. 6; xxxiii. 18, 19; xxxiv.; xxxv. 1—4; xxxvii. 12, 28; xliii. 22; xlix. 5—7; Deut. xxvii. 11; Josh. ix. 33—35; xx. 7; xxi. 20, 21; xxiv. 1, 25, 32; Judg. ix. 7, 22, 34—45; xxi. 1; 2 Kings xvii. 5, 6, 24; xviii. 9; 1 Chron. vi. 67; vii. 28; Ezra iv. 2; Jer. xli. 5; John iv. 5; Acts vii. 16; viii. 5). The article "Shechem," by Dr. Hackett, in Dr

Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' vol. iii. pp. 1234—1240, is of exceptional interest. **All Israel.** No doubt this expression may mean even here the assemblage of the federated twelve tribes. Considering the immediate recurrence of the expression in ver. 3, it must be, however, that the Jeroboam party of the ten tribes (headed by the strong and self-conscious Ephraimites) are especially in view; in point of fact, of course, all the twelve tribes *were* represented in the gathering of ver. 1. There can be no division of opinion about this, though the meeting be represented as one demanded or occasioned by the attitude of Israel, in the lesser comprehension of the name.

Vers. 2, 3.—In these verses the compiler brings up lost time. He has not mentioned before the name of Jeroboam, just as he has not mentioned the lustful sins of Solomon that led to idolatry, and those sequel idolatries of his, that heralded the shattering of his kingdom immediately on his decease. So we are now told all in one how Jeroboam, in his refuge-retreat in Egypt (1 Kings xi. 26—40), "heard" of Solomon's demise, and apparently (see first clause of our third verse) heard of it in this wise, that "they," *i.e.* the "all Israel" (of our first verse) "had sent and called him." Probably the growing sense of discontent and the rankling in those tribes that were not closely breathing the atmosphere of Jerusalem and *the* one home county, because of their burdens and taxation, and possibly also Ephraim's ancient and famed rivalry, knew instinctively that this hour of Solomon's death was the hour, if any, of their redemption. The *lacunæ* in the history speak for themselves; for though the tribes, after the long seething of their complainings and sufferings, needed but short time for deliberation, Solomon's death must have been an accomplished fact before they (whoever the "they" were) sent to Egypt to Jeroboam; and that sending and his returning or otherwise, at any rate his hearing and consequent returning, must have taken time. Considering all this, it *is* remarkable that no note of time is found. But had only our first verse been placed as the last of the foregoing chapter, the ambiguity would have been less. For the strange variations on the history of Jeroboam (a name, together with that of Rehoboam, new to Solomon's time, meaning "many-peopled," while Rehoboam signifies "increaser of people"), as found in the Hebrew texts, and additions to it, see the Septuagint Version, 1 Kings xi. 43; xii. 24; and A. P. Stanley's article, "Jeroboam," in Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 979, 980; and comp. again 1 Kings xi. 26—40; xii. 25; xiv. 13, 17, 18. Stanley's faith in the Septuagint notwithstanding, its variations and additions are not reconcileable enough with either the Hebrew text or themselves to command anything like unfeigned acceptance. One thing may be considered to come out without much obscurity or uncertainty—that Jeroboam was the acknowledged rather than tacit leader of an opposition that was tacit at present rather than acknowledged; nor is it at all improbable, under all the circumstances, that the Rehoboam party *is*, knowing well how the ground really lay, were as content to let the coronation, so to call it, at Shechem linger awhile for Jeroboam's return, as Jeroboam's opposition party *but* desired and perhaps compelled the delay. Of course, Jeroboam knew well, none better than he, as of old the overseer of the forced labour and taxation of Ephraim (1 Kings xi. 28; ix. 15), how grievous the service and how heavy the yoke to his people, even when he had acquitted himself as the most "industrious" of taskmasters.

Ver. 4.—**The grievous servitude . . . heavy yoke.** These may, for conciseness' sake, be supposed to correspond with the naturally enough hated "forced labour" (1 Kings iv. 6, 7; v. 13—16; xi. 27, 28) and the burdensome "taxes" (1 Kings iv. 19—28) which had not failed to become more odious to the people as familiarity with them grew. The refreshing New Testament contrast to all this (Matt. xi. 28—30) will occur to every memory.

Ver. 5.—This first reply of Rehoboam was not necessarily inauspicious. Yet sometimes, as it proved now, the caution that takes time to consider heralds fatal mistake. This is when either a generous, instinctive impulse, asking an instantaneous obedience, is chilled by some self-regard; or yet worse, when the offended Spirit is restrained, and no inner guiding voice is heard, as Saul found, to his ruin.

Ver. 6.—**The old men who had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived.** The first practical step now taken by Rehoboam, if he delay at all, is the right and far from inauspicious step. *O si sic omnia* that followed after! The "old men" here spoken of, and not before distinctly spoken of, need not necessarily be regarded as professional advisers of Solomon, nor as a privy council of state; they may designate those of like age with him, or but little his juniors, and with whom he had chiefly associated for his own society.

Vers. 7, 8.—Rehoboam was now (1 Kings xiv. 21; ch. xii. 13; but cf. xiii. 7) forty-one years of age; he was just too old to find any excuse for inability to gauge either the experience, and value of it, of the "old," or the inexperience, and foolishness of it, of the immature human heart. According to the modern phrase, he was just ripe to have known and bethought himself of this. But all rashly Rehoboam casts the die. The sound judgment, real knowledge, opportune and practical advice of the "old men," uttered evidently off so kind a tongue, should have been indeed now "as good as an inheritance; yea, better too" (Eccles. vii. 11, margin). The reading of the parallel is well worthy to be noted (1 Kings xi. 7), with its manifestly pleasantly and skilfully worded antithesis, "If *thou this day* will be a servant to this people . . . then *they* will be thy servants *for ever*." Our words, however, have their own exquisite beauty about them, **If thou wilt be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them.** One might fancy that Saul, and David, and Solomon, and angels themselves bended over the scene, and looked and listened and longed for wisdom and love and right to prevail. **The young men that had grown up with him.** While this expression throws light as above on that which speaks of Rehoboam's old men counsellors, it wakens the question how men of forty-one years of age can be called "young," as Rehoboam was not living in patriarchal aged times. And the question is emphasized by the language applied to Rehoboam in ch. xiii. 7, where he is described as "young and tender-hearted, and" unable, for want of strength of character and of knowledge, to "withstand vain men" (as he surely shows too clearly *now*). It has been suggested ('Speaker's Commentary,' ii. 562, Note C) that כא (21) should be read for מא (41) in the two passages quoted above (1 Kings xiv. 21; ch. xii. 13). The suggestion seems good, and it is certainly reasonable for the requirements of both matter and manner.

Vers. 10, 11.—Language perhaps never spoke more clearly what was in man. And it spoke in this case the mad infatuation of insolent temerity itself.

Ver. 12.—It may be worth observing that the history is silent of what of hope and fear or other thought and feeling transpired with Jeroboam and his party these three critical days of suspense, as also it was so silent as to what transpired with them during the three days, three weeks, three months, before the first interview with Rehoboam at Shechem.

Ver. 13.—**Roughly**; *i.e.* Rehoboam had not "heard the instruction of a father," and had been an ill pupil indeed of him who wrote and taught, "A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Prov. xv. 1).

Ver. 15.—**So the king hearkened not . . . for the cause was of God . . . his word, which he spake by . . . Ahijah** (see, as before, 1 Kings xi. 29—31, also 9—39). Rehoboam hearkened not, as Pharaoh hearkened not, but hardened his heart. The Divine word foretold, as the Divine mind fore*knew*, the inevitable course of the stream, that took its source in and from Solomon's faithless heart and life. Solomon "being dead yet" bears his full share of the responsibility of what Rehoboam was, and shortly came to *show* he was. Everything must fall out as God foretells it shall fall out, not because "the cause is from him" in *this* sense that he has made it, but in the sense that he has pronounced it, through knowing it with an absolute knowledge. It were but a thing to be expected also, that just in the measure that the Bible is the Word of God, it shall exhibit and pronounce plainly the phenomena of his own ultimate fiats, rather than linger to track or describe the uncertainties of human morality or conduct. Let but that *result* appear, which God has with his sure and abiding Word declared, and the practical attitude and language of Scripture are that it is vain to fight against it; for the thing is of God. It was known of him and said of him. And it carries its punishment or its recompense in it, as of him. It will be noticed, again, how our compiler refers to the incident of Ahijah, as though he had recorded it, which he had not done.

Ver. 16.—**What portion have we in David?** (see 2 Sam. xx. 1). **To your tents, O Israel**; *i.e.* there is nothing more to be done here; all may as well go *home*. The use, and especially repeated use, of the names, David, Jesse, David, plainly speaks tribe rivalry, if not jealousy.

Ver. 17.—To the tribe of Judah the family of David belonged. There was less inclination on *this* ground, to begin with, among them to go to the length of revolting. Though they too are pressed with burden and taxation, yet royal expenditure, residence, magnificence, are all near them, and are some *solatium* doubtless to them. God said that this tribe and (as is abundantly evident from Ahijah's forcibly dramatic parable of the rent garment) Benjamin also should be saved to Rehoboam and for ever to David's line, and again it is evident that he works in the midst of human event, and moral cause and effect. Israel would not have revolted but that Jeroboam was of Ephraim, and Judah would not have remained steadfast but that, with other determining influences also, to Judah belonged Rehoboam and Solomon and David.

Ver. 18.—**Hadoram that was over the tribute . . . stoned him . . . Rehoboam made speed . . . to flee.** Hadoram was perhaps the same as Adoniram, son of Abda (1 Kings iv. 6; v. 14), but on the arbitrament of age this is less likely, and certainly it is very unlikely that he was one with Hadoram of 2 Sam. xx. 24. Rehoboam must be supposed to have sent Hadoram either to make some "tribute" summons, or try some arrangement respecting it, or respecting conciliatory steps. The reception he met warns Rehoboam to make the quickest escape possible, and no doubt opens his eyes fully to what he has done. It was the remanet of his delusive self-confidence to send this collector of taxes to those who had begged some remission of taxation.

Ver. 19.—Unto this day. So our compiler of Captivity and post-Captivity date transcribes the literal words of his copy.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—19.—***A notable and very mournful instance of lacking wisdom through not asking of God.*** The compiler of the Chronicles, in the pursuit of the special objects which he had in view, feels that he need lose no time in details, or in parts of the whole history, which were to be found elsewhere, but which were less important to his own object. The fifteenth verse of this chapter supplies us with an instance of this, its reference to Ahijah the Shilonite finding full explanation in the fuller parallel (1 Kings xi. 29—40). Our own familiarity with the mournful history and mournful needlessness of the schism, and the method in which it was brought about, which is the subject of this chapter, seems to lose for us nothing of that same mournfulness. Men may make use of the contents of this portion of the history of Israel (as of other portions of Holy Scripture, which seem to trench on the unfathomable depth of the doctrine of God's election and fore-ordination) to find their (ever very easily found) theoretic difficulties, as unconcealedly suggested by the words of the above-quoted fifteenth verse. But it remains the same, that the election and the fore-ordaining of One who fore*knows*, and whose word of *prophecy* is as sure as the word of any other being *after* the event, are altogether different phenomena, different facts from what they otherwise should seem to be. Still, the central mystery must needs remain, before which we wonder, exercise faith, and silently adore, or we should not be creatures in the presence of the Creator. The history of this crisis of the nation highly favoured reminds us—

I. OF THE SURE WORD OF GOD. The forewarning, "Thou shalt surely die," was not more truly fulfilled than the forewarning made now, not a century and a quarter ago, that the nation that would have an earthly king would come to find, not its gain therein, but its loss. The *dicta* of revealed religion (for such both of the above forewarnings may be justly styled) are great, simple, and eternal for man. And from instances on a universal scale, and then on a national scale, are we, as individuals, mercifully, most forcibly, and most graciously admonished.

II. THE ERRING UNCERTAINTY FIRST, AND THEN THE CERTAIN ERRINGNESS OF THE MAN WHO FAILS TO MAKE GOD AND RIGHT, DUTY AND TRUTH, HIS SWORN GUIDE. High place, high office, high responsibility,—*these* give the prominence which is needed to enforce the example of such truth. The deviation is not more real than in the humblest, lowliest life, but it is more conspicuous. Let us note, as circumstances bearing on the case, what follows. 1. Rehoboam must have had some forewarning of the place to which he was to come. Solomon's was not a sudden death, nor his son's a sudden, unexpected accession. 2. Rehoboam must have had some acquaintance with the severity of the oppression and servitude of the people as a whole, and probably some anticipation of the likelihood of the representations, which in fact they made to him, of their experiences. 3. These representations, and the manner in which they were brought before Rehoboam, were far from unreasonable. 4. Rehoboam, to all appearance, is disposed to begin by acting wisely. He will wait three days before replying. He will utilize that interval by asking the advice of the experienced. He asks it; it is given, and given rightly. 5. There can be little doubt that it was at this point that self and self-will showed themselves in Rehoboam. Perhaps he had already heard, already knew, the feeling and the reckless bias of the younger men—for it is significantly said they were of those who had been brought up with him, and who were his chief associates now—or otherwise, if his own inclination and will were strong enough of themselves, he did not lean to the judgment of the old men, and hoped for different advice from the younger men, though it were but the merest prop to his own wish. He asks their advice, and is flattered and is glad that it leaps with the thought of his own brave and bravado spirit! In this show of right-doing, in this superficial wisdom, so different from that special wisdom noted in his father, one fatal defect existed. He asked the advice of the old. That it might not be said he asked the advice of one class alone, he asked the advice of the young also. But he did *not* ask the advice of God, he did not pray for the direction of God. And his foot slipped; he stumbled and fell, and that fall was great. Two things were wrong with even his earthly wisdom. To ask the advice of the young at all was a mistake, and to a great extent even a contradiction in terms. For inevitably they were wanting in the experience which was necessary to draw upon for advice. To ask the advice of the young, *after* having asked and received that of the aged, was a greater mistake. It *looked* like a sham and a delusion, and a self-deception, and a *craving after* self-deception; and such it was. It was an affront to common sense, an insult to his own conscience, and a sop thrown to *self*—that enemy which is often, very often, a man's worst, very worst enemy! Rehoboam asked advice of those persons who he knew wouldn't be above giving the advice which he wanted. So he, indeed, easily got what he wanted. So it may be said again God permitted him to have what he saw he was bent on having, as he permitted the people and nation to have, some hundred and twenty years before, the king they were bent on having. But he lived to rue the day, and rueing it still ever, he died. An unreasonable, a cruel, and a brutally insolent answer alienated once and for ever the hearts, service, and lives of the larger part of the people from their king; but a king who had disentitled himself. A very few days and he was a fugitive (ver. 18), though to his own capital—that capital one lamentably dismembered in its provinces. So stumble and so fall, sooner or later, those who set at naught kindness, justice, God, to serve self, folly, and time present.

III. THE INFINITE RISK OF MISCHIEF IRREPARABLE THAT LURKS IN THE INTEMPERATE SIN, THE INTEMPERATE TEMPER, OR, PUT GENERALLY, THE INTEMPERATE ACTION, OF MEN IN AUTHORITY, BY REASON OF THE EASY EXCUSE FOR SCHISM, THE FACILE THOUGH SUPERFICIAL DEFENCE OF IT, THEREBY OFFERED TO THE VERY LIPS OF THOSE WHO ARE, OR OUGHT TO BE, UNDER THEIR AUTHORITY, AND WHO OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE REMAINED IN HAPPY UNQUESTIONING SUBORDINATION TO THAT AUTHORITY. The illustration and instance of this here is patent and glaring. The disaster was enormous. The long-trailed consequences were mournful, melancholy, miserable. The fault and sin of the ten tribes or their representatives are undeniable. Their sweet reasonableness of yesterday and three days ago is, unfortunately, not simply blown to the winds or evaporated into thin air—worse by far, it is converted into a determined breaking loose from some of the holiest bonds wherewith it is the mercy of Heaven to bind on earth. The kingdom of God is one; the Church of God is one; the people of God are one. Disguise it as laxity of creed may, disguise it as laxity of practice may, disguise it as the great ancient or even greater modern cleavages of apostasy may, the calamity is of the nature of an avalanche alike of faith and of good works, and ever buries beneath its disastrous *débris*, not bodies but souls innumerable, and of immeasurable worth. Hence the golden calves, instead of the One only Object of worship, without image or likeness. Hence Bethel and Dan, instead of Jerusalem without compare. Hence priests of the lowest life, *i.e.* without the credentials of devotion, love, Divine call and appointment. Hence, instead of the one altar, many, but these rended, their ashes poured out to the ground, and incense a rejected abomination, and all the long-drawn sequel of woe untraceable by human eye, irremediable by human power. Does not the world take more loss from the dissensions of the Church than all the Church takes from the united enmities of the world?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Two young men.* These two young men, Rehoboam and Jeroboam—for we may regard them as such, though the former was forty years old when he began to reign—may be viewed together, as they were brought together, and may furnish us with some useful suggestions for the guidance of our life. We have them—

I. STARTING FROM DIFFERENT ENDS OF THE SOCIAL SCALE. Rehoboam born in the palace, born to the purple, surrounded with every luxury, accustomed to the utmost deference, expecting the greatest things. Jeroboam commencing his career almost at the bottom of the scale, losing his father when quite young, obliged to work hard to sustain his widowed mother, obtaining employment as a workman in connection with one of King Solomon's works, with "no prospects" in life.

II. Meeting midway in their career. When they looked one another in the face at Shechem, what was it that each saw in the other? Probably the king's son saw in the son of Nebat a man who was clothed in presumption, who had forgotten his position, who was entertaining a daring and criminal purpose in his heart. And probably Jeroboam saw in the enthroned monarch a man who was unfitted for his post, unequal to the strain that would be put upon his powers, a feeble man who would prove an easy prey to his own designs. No kindly feeling, we may be sure, shone in the eyes of either prince or subject as they confronted one another that day at Shechem.

III. Challenged to make a choice on a critical occasion. Rehoboam was now called upon to decide definitely what policy he would pursue in his administration—whether that of leniency and popularity, or that of stringency and force; whether he would "rule by love or fear." Jeroboam had, at this point in his life, to decide whether he would adopt the *safe* policy of continuing in retreat, or the bold and venturesome one of heading a national revolt, and being either crushed beneath the feet of authority or raised to the height of a successful revolution.

IV. Disappointing the hopes of their best friends. Singularly enough, the names of both these men signified "enlarger or multiplier of the people;" they pointed, probably, to the hopes of their parents concerning them. But though they both occupied the throne, and one of them rose to a much higher position than could have been anticipated at his birth, both men failed in the sight of God and in the estimate of the wise. The one by his folly estranged and lost the greater part of his kingdom; the other led Israel into shameful and ruinous apostasy.

1. *Be not much affected by social position*; very great advantages in this respect will not carry us far along the path of true success; without character their value will soon expire. On the other hand, great disadvantages may be overcome by industry, energy, patience, virtue. 2. *Be prepared to make the decisive choice*, whenever the critical moment may come. We cannot be sure when this will arrive, but there will come an hour—there may come more hours than one—when a decision has to be taken by us on which the gravest consequences, to ourselves or to others, will depend. Shall we then be equal to the occasion? Shall we be prepared to speak the wise word, to choose the right course, to take the step that will lead upward and not downward? This will depend on the character that we shall have been forming *before that time comes*. If we shall have been neglecting our opportunity and misusing our privileges, we shall then be found wanting; but if we shall have been gathering wisdom at every open source, we shall be able to speak, to act, to decide as God would have us do, as we shall afterwards thank God we did. 3. *Aspire to fulfil the best hopes and prophecies of younger days*. We may have a name, a reputation, to uphold. Our parents and teachers may be looking for good and even great things from us. Let us be earnest and eager to live such a life, that not only shall there be no painful discrepancy between the hope and the reality, but that there shall be a happy and satisfying correspondence between the two.—C.

Vers. 4—14.—*The legacy of brilliance, etc.* We have here—

I. The legacy of brilliance. "Thy father made our yoke grievous" (ver. 4). No man ever had a nobler opportunity than Solomon had. His father handed to him a united nation, a country where enemies were subdued, the kindly and helpful shadow of a great name and a beloved disposition and an illustrious career. He was endowed by God with great talent and surpassing wealth. He had before him an object of honourable ambition, which would be acceptable to Heaven and gratifying to his subjects. But, instead of pursuing the path of usefulness and the prize of a people's gratitude, he aimed at overwhelming splendour. And what did he gain by his pursuit? Forty years of selfish gratification, not undimmed (we may be sure) by many cares, disappointments, difficulties, in his home (or harem) and in his court; and when he died he left a kingdom less compact, a dynasty less secure than he found when he took the reins of government from his father David. All his brilliance ended in a popular sense of injury, in a general consciousness that the people had been weighted with needlessly heavy burdens, with a store of suppressed popular discontent ready to burst out and blaze forth at the first opportunity. Brilliance is a very fascinating thing, whether it be on the throne or in parliamentary government, or in the courts of law, or in business, or in the school. But what is its end? To what issues does it lead? Usually it conducts to poverty, to serious error, to discomfiture, often to a catastrophe. But, where brilliance breaks down and is ruined, steady and conscientious faithfulness, under the guidance of heavenly wisdom, will succeed—will lead on to a real enrichment, to a lasting safety, to an honour that may be accepted and enjoyed.

II. THE WISDOM OF CONTEMPLATION AND CONSULTATION. "He said . . . Come again unto me after three days. . . . And he took counsel" (vers. 5, 6). It is, indeed, true that no good ultimately came of this delay and this consultation. But that was because Rehoboam consulted the wrong men. He did well in asking for time and in appealing to others at this critical juncture. Supposing that this demand took him by surprise, nothing would have been more foolish than to have given a reply offhand. A remonstrance is very likely to excite anger in the first instance, and no wise man will come to an important decision when he is out of temper. It is in the hour of complete self-control that we should settle grave matters affecting our destiny. Moreover, we do well to take the judgment of others. It was due to the nation that his father's wise statesmen should be asked for their advice in a great national crisis. It was due to himself that his inexperience should secure the inestimable advantage of their ripe sagacity. It is always due to ourselves that we get the additional light which can be gained from an impartial judgment. No man can possibly look at his own affairs in a perfectly pure atmosphere; no man can take an entirely unbiassed view of his own temporal interests. Men who look from outside see what we cannot possibly see, and their counsel is sure to be worth our consideration. "The physician who prescribes for himself, or the lawyer who advises himself, has a fool for his patient or for his client." This saying will hold good in every department of human action. Take time for thought, and invite the frank and full counsel of your true friends.

III. OUR TRUE COUNSELLORS. These are: 1. They who have had an opportunity of knowing. The young men whom Rehoboam consulted could have given him very good advice on some subjects, on those that belonged to their period of life—athletics, fashions, etc.; but of statesmanship what could they tell? We should take care to consult *those who know*, who have learned in the best schools. 2. They who give us frank rather than palatable counsel; who will tell us what they believe to be for the best, rather than that which will humour our own fancies. 3. They whose counsel makes for peace rather than for strife. There are times when the wisest will be for war, but in nine cases out of ten the true Christian advocate will urge conciliation and concord.—C.

Ver. 18.—*Ignominy, its source and its avoidance.* For the son of Solomon and the grandson of David to meet the tribes of Israel in solemn assembly, and, after holding conference with them, to have his officer and ambassador scornfully stoned to death, and then to betake himself to his chariot with all speed and flee to Jerusalem,—this was a pitiable illustration of human ignominy. We almost pity the abject prince for his misery as much as we blame him for his folly.

I. THE SOURCE OF IGNOMINY. What is it that brings men down to such dishonour? It is: 1. When they assume a position to which they are *not entitled;* when they take a higher place than they can fairly claim, and the "more honourable man" comes in to supplant them, and they "begin with shame to take the lower place" (Luke xiv. 9). An assumption of social or literary or ecclesiastical superiority, unwarranted by the facts, must sooner or later end in an ignominious surrender. 2. When they undertake a task for which they are *unfitted.* The son of Gideon wisely shrank from the act of execution for which his immaturity rendered him unfitted. "As the man is, so is his strength," said he. Youth must not undertake the task of manhood, nor ignorance that of learning, nor inexperience that of trained and proved ability, nor mental feebleness that of intellectual vigour, nor moral frailty that of spiritual strength. Else it will sustain an ignominious fall. 3. When they adopt a course which should have been *scrupulously avoided.* What could have been the result of such insensate folly as that of which Rehoboam had just been guilty but this ignominious flight? When his far stronger father had incensed the citizens by heavy and burdensome taxation, what a ruinous mistake it was for him to declare that he would go even further than Solomon himself had gone in this direction! To take a course which conflicts with men's natural rights, or which kindles their just indignation, or which wounds their keen susceptibilities, is to invite dishonour to our door; it is to robe our own shoulders with the mantle of shame. 4. When we credit ourself with a character which we have not gained; when we assume that we are in spirit and in principle what in truth we are not, that we have moral qualities which we really do not possess;—in this case, the dishonour that awaits us may come either in this world or the next. (1) We may be found unable to resist the temptations which we encounter, and our lamentable failure may expose us to the rebuke and the condemnation of man (see Acts v. 1—11; xiii. 13; xv. 38; 2 Tim. iv. 10). (2) We may find ourselves rejected and expelled on the great day of judgment (Matt. vi. 21—23; xxv. 44, 45).

II. THE AVOIDANCE OF IGNOMINY. If we would not be put to shame by our fellow-men or by the Divine Judge, we must do these things: 1. *Study* until we *know* ourselves; examine our hearts until we know what is in them—what is the spirit we are of, what are the principles at the root of our behaviour. 2. Be content with the position and the work which our heavenly Father has assigned us (see Ps. lxxxiv. 10; cxxxi. 1). 3. Make continual and earnest supplication that God will reveal us to ourselves (Ps. xix. 12; cxxxix. 23, 24). Then, instead of an ignominious retreat, our path will be that of the just, shining more and more; we shall advance from honour to honour; God himself will crown us with his Divine commendation.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The coronation of a king.* I. THE PERSON OF THE MONARCH. Rehoboam, the man "who enlarges the people," a name upon which his subsequent history was a satire. 1. *The child of a heathen mother.* This was Naamah, the Ammonitess (ch. xii. 13; 1 Kings xiv. 31), a daughter of the last Ammonite king, Hanun, the son of Nahash (1 Chron. xix. 1, etc.). Rehoboam probably suffered in character and constitution from his taint of heathen blood. 2. *The son of a distinguished father.* Judged at the worst, Solomon was a great king, no less renowned for administrative faculty than for wisdom and wealth. The first two, it is clear, do not pass from sire to son by the law of heredity. A man may bequeath money to his son, but he is helpless in the matter of intellectual wealth. A king may hand on crown and throne to his descendant, but he cannot communicate capacity to rule. 3. *The heir of an extensive empire.* The sovereignty of the undivided kingdom and of all the tributary princes fell into his hands on his father's decease.

II. THE SCENE OF THE CORONATION. Shechem. 1. *A spot of rare beauty.* Eighteen hours distant from Jerusalem, and situated at the foot of Mount Gerizim, in the mountain range of Ephraim (Judg. ix. 7)—the modern *Nablous*, near the site of the ancient Shechem, "is the most beautiful, perhaps it might be said the only very beautiful spot in Central Palestine" (Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 233, 234). 2. *A scene of inspiring memories.* Patriarchs had pitched tents and erected altars there (Gen. xii. 6, 7; xxxiii. 18—20). Thither Joshua had convened the princes and elders, the heads and representatives of the people, when the conquest of Canaan had been completed, and made a covenant with them, setting them a statute and ordinance—so practically constituting Shechem the first capital of the land (Josh. xxiv. 1, 25). There Joseph's bones were consigned to a sepulchre in the parcel of ground which Jacob had bought of Hamor for a hundred pieces of silver (Josh. xxiv. 32). There, on the two mountains which overlooked the valley, Gerizim and Ebal, had been placed the blessing and the curse as commanded by Jehovah (Deut. xi. 29, 30; Josh. viii. 31, 33). There also the first attempt, though unsuccessful, at king-making had been made (Judg. ix. 1). 3. *A locality unauthorized for coronations.* Stanley speaks of it as having been the custom, even after the erection of Jerusalem into the capital, to inaugurate new reigns at Shechem, citing as a modern parallel "the long continuance of Rheims, the ancient metropolitan city of France, as the scene of the French coronations" ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 239); but, as Rehoboam's is the only coronation that took place at Shechem (in addition to the above-mentioned crowning of Abimelech), one example, or even two, can hardly be said to constitute a custom. The proper place for carrying out such a second coronation as the northern tribes contemplated was Jerusalem, the metropolis of the entire kingdom, just as when they had acknowledged David's sovereignty (2 Sam. v. 1) they came to Hebron, at that time the capital of Judah. Besides, Rehoboam had already been crowned at Jerusalem, and in that act the northern tribes should have taken part. That they stood aloof and claimed for themselves a right of either acquiescing in or repudiating the sovereignty of Rehoboam shows, if not that they still had a right of free election to the crown, at least that their fusion with Judah was not so complete as, after seventy-three years, it might have been. Their intention, probably, was to acknowledge Rehoboam as king, but at the same time to assert their freedom by insisting on his compliance with certain demands and conditions. Hence they abstained from the national gathering at Jerusalem, and summoned Rehoboam to a new assembly at Shechem to receive their fealty as if they were a separate empire. "It was a significant hint to Rehoboam, if he had properly understood it" (Ewald).

III. THE GIVERS OF THE CROWN. All Israel. The ten tribes as distinguished from Judah and Benjamin, which had already taken the oath of allegiance to the son of Solomon (ch. ix. 31). The northern tribes, from the time of David's accession to the throne of Saul (2 Sam. ii. 4), when they adhered to the sceptre of Ishbosheth, Saul's son (2 Sam. ii. 10), had asserted a semi-national independence; this again, after having lain in abeyance for the greater part of a century, suddenly flamed up, and gave ominous outlook of trouble to the young prince.

LESSONS. 1. Kings' crowns oftentimes conceal thorns. 2. Those thrones are stablest which rest on the free choice and affection of subjects. 3. Those peoples are best ruled whose sovereigns by their lives show they have been enthroned by God.—W.

Ver. 2.—*The recall of an exile.* I. THE EXILE'S STORY. 1. *His name.* Jeroboam, "whose people are many;" the son of Nebat. His father was an Ephrathite of Zereda, in Ephraim; his mother a widow (1 Kings xi. 26)—which may mean either that he had been born in unlawful wedlock (LXX.), or that his father had died while he was young, leaving him to be brought up by his widowed mother (Josephus). 2. *His character.* Courageous and industrious, "a mighty man of valour" (Judg. vi. 12; xi. 1), and a man that did work (Prov. xxii. 29)—two qualities befitting youth, and almost certain to bring temporal success in their train; two qualities that should never be absent from Christians, who are specially commanded to "add to their faith virtue, or courage" (2 Pet. i. 5), and to "be not slothful in business" (Rom. xii. 10). 3. *His promotion.* Just when Jeroboam came to manhood, Solomon was engaged in building Millo, and closing up the breach in the city of David (1 Kings ix. 15). For these purposes Solomon raised a levy of workmen, not of the Hittites, Amorites, etc. (ch. viii. 7), but of Israelites, who worked by courses of ten thousand a month (1 Kings v. 13; ix. 15); or imposed certain burdens in connection with those works which required to be borne by the Israelites. Discerning Jeroboam to be a capable youth, of spirit and energy, Solomon appointed him overseer or governor of all those Israelites employed in or about the works who belonged to the house of Joseph, *i.e.* who were Ephraimites. 4. *His incipient rebellion.* Serving in this office, he began to commune with his own thoughts about raising a revolt. Either as an Ephraimite he felt humiliated at being obliged to work in the capital of Judah, or being a youth of aspiring mind he was not content with the elevation suddenly thrust upon him, and wished to climb higher; but in any case, when the "mood" was on him, an incident occurred which, chiming in as it did with his own aspirations, pricked the sides of his intent, and bore him onwards in his dangerous career of ambition. That incident was his meeting with Ahijah the Shilonite, who told him that Jehovah intended to wrest ten tribes from the Davidic kingdom and give them to him, Jeroboam (1 Kings xi. 29). A perilous communication for a youth like Jeroboam to carry about with him! Josephus states that it prompted him "to persuade the people to forsake Solomon, to make a disturbance, and to bring the government over to himself" ('Ant.,' viii. 7. 8). 5. *His precipitate flight.* His treason having come to the king's knowledge, he was obliged to save himself from well-merited execution by suddenly withdrawing from the land, and seeking refuge in Egypt under the sceptre of Shishak (see on ch. xii. 2).

II. THE EXILE'S RETURN. 1. *Its date.* When Solomon was dead. A king's life is sometimes a kingdom's best bulwark against revolution. So long as Solomon lived, insurrection under Jeroboam was impracticable. Yet a king's life may be the greatest barrier to the progress of a good work. Moses could not return to Egypt to resume his emancipation work until Rameses II. was dead (Exod. ii. 23). Joseph could not return from Egypt with Mary and Jesus until Herod was dead (Matt. ii. 19). 2. *Its occasion.* The invitation of the northern tribes (ver. 3). This, addressed to Jeroboam while at the court of Shishak (1 Kings xii. 2; Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 8. 1), was probably the medium through which he learnt of Solomon's decease. Not necessary to hold that it was only despatched to Jeroboam after the tribes had assembled at Shechem (Bähr), since it may easily have been sent immediately on Solomon's death, between which event and the gathering at Shechem twelve months intervened. Jeroboam, however, is commonly supposed (Bertheau, Bähr) to have returned from Egypt *ex proprio motu*, and to have been residing with his wife and child at Zareda or Sarira, when summoned to Shechem. The suggestion (Keil) is probably correct that two invitations were addressed to Jeroboam—the first while he was yet in Egypt, to return to his native land; the second while he lingered at Zareda, to come to Shechem. 3. *Its object.* Whether of his own accord, or in obedience to the summons of the tribes, Jeroboam returned from Egypt; his ulterior aim, there can be little question, was to further his own ambitious projects.

LESSONS. 1. The value to a young man of energy and talent. 2. The danger as well as sin of harbouring ambitious thoughts. 3. The hatefulness of treachery. 4. The possibility of a wicked man's schemes furthering God's designs.—W.

Vers. 3—19.—*The loss of a kingdom.* I. A REASONABLE REQUEST PREFERRED. (Vers. 3, 4.) 1. *A public grievance stated.* The northern tribes, through Jeroboam, complained to Rehoboam that Solomon had made their yoke grievous. Whether this was true or not has been much debated. (1) That it was largely used as a pretext to justify their subsequent behaviour is not without support. In the first place, it was put forward by tribes already disaffected, and through the medium of one who had formerly shown himself a traitor. Then, that Solomon, in making a levy of his subjects for carrying on his numerous buildings, was only acting in accordance with the custom of Oriental monarchs generally from Egypt to Babylon, must be conceded. Besides, it may be assumed that no more oppressive tasks were laid on the northern than on the southern tribes, from none of which complaint was heard. Further, if heavier burdens than before were placed upon the people by Solomon, that was largely inevitable from the magnificence of his court and the extensive building operations demanded by the safety as well as glory of the kingdom. And finally, if the people were heavily burdened under Solomon, they still enjoyed considerable advantages of peace and prosperity. (2) In support of the assertion made by the tribes, attention may be called to the facts that neither Rehoboam nor his counsellors denied, but rather both undisguisedly admitted, its truth (ver. 11); that the complaint was not that of the house of Joseph alone, but of "all Israel;" and that the circumstance of Judah and Benjamin refusing to back it up is not sufficient to demonstrate its falsehood. 2. *A measure of relief demanded.* "Make the heavy yoke of thy father lighter." Not only was this reasonable, but it should have been a point in their favour, that they sought redress for their grievance by the peaceful method of conference rather than by immediately resorting to the sword. Instead, however, of granting their request, Rehoboam temporized, put them off, asked for three days to consider the matter, promising at the end of that time to give them a definite and final answer. Never before had there been in Israel's history such a critical "three days," unless, perhaps, "the three days'" start on leaving Egypt (Exod. viii. 27, 28), or the three days' preparation for the conquest (Josh. i. 11). The issue of this "three days'" deliberation on the part of Rehoboam was momentous. According as it should be should likewise be the after-course of history, not for Israel alone, but for the world. Almost always dangerous, delay was in this case disastrous.

II. A GOOD COUNSEL REJECTED. (Vers. 6—8.) 1. *The king's aged advisers.* It argued some sense on the part of Rehoboam that he first solicited advice from the experienced statesmen of the kingdom, and the privy councillors of his late father—perhaps for a moment he was of opinion that "days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom" (Job xxxii. 7); it proved him possessed of little sense that he closed his ears against their prudent suggestions (Prov. xxiii. 9). 2. *The king's bad* *course.* "The accumulated wisdom of the Solomonic era recommended concession, The old councillors gave just such advice as might have been found in the Book of Proverbs" (Stanley). They advised acquiescence in the popular demand. They urged the king to win the people by kindness. The beautiful antithesis of the Book of Kings, "If thou wilt be a servant unto this people, and wilt save them . . . then they will be thy servants for ever" (1 Kings xii. 7), is here awanting, but the sentiment is the same. The aged senators believed that kindness held the key to the human heart, and that "a soft answer turneth away wrath" (Prov. xv. 1; xxv. 15) as much in nations as in individuals; they knew that one must often stoop to conquer, and that he who would be served by others should ever exhibit a readiness to serve others (Matt. vii. 12); nay, that the true function of a king is to serve his people—a thought happily expressed by the *Ich dien* of the Prince of Wales's crest. 3. *The king's consummate folly.* "He forsook the counsel of the old men." Had he not been a fool, for whom wisdom is too high (Prov. xxiv. 7), in whose eyes his own way is always right (Prov. xii. 15), and who, as a consequence, walketh in darkness (Eccles. ii. 14), he might have discerned that the situation was critical, that rebellion was in the air, and that the old experienced statesmen of the last reign were the only pilots competent to steer the ship of state through the breakers. Unlike the men of Issachar, who were men that had "understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. xii. 32), Rehoboam was "a strong ass" (Gen. xlix. 14), impatient of control and incapable of guiding either himself or others. Some men never see the right thing to do until it is too late.

III. AN EVIL POLICY ADOPTED. (Vers. 9—11.) 1. *Its proposers.* "The young men that were grown up with him"—either the statesmen of the new reign whom Rehoboam had appointed from among his own companions, or young courtiers who had danced attendance on his person while heir-apparent to the crown, and now clung to the steps of the throne in the hope of preferment. Though afterwards spoken of as young (ch. xiii. 7), Rehoboam was at this time over forty years of age. 2. *Its proposals.* Not concession, but coercion, should be the order of the day. Their complaints should be silenced, not removed. Their appeal for lighter service should be answered by a heavier yoke. For Solomon's whips they should have Rehoboam's scorpions. Other rulers besides Rehoboam have tried to still the complaints of their subjects by more and heavier oppression; *e.g.* Pharaoh (Exod. v. 15—19), and the Stuarts of England, not to mention others. 3. *Its pursuance.* Rehoboam hearkened to the counsel of the young men, and at the close of the stipulated three days answered Jeroboam and his co-deputies "roughly," in the terms put into his mouth by his hot-headed advisers. "It was the speech of a despotic tyrant, not of a shepherd and ruler appointed by God over his people" (Keil). It undid in a moment the work of centuries. It shattered the kingdom which David's sword and Solomon's wisdom had built.

IV. A DIVINE COUNSEL FULFILLED. (Ver. 15.) 1. *The Divine purpose.* The division of the kingdom. Foretold by Ahijah (1 Kings xi. 31), the hour had struck for its accomplishment. Jehovah doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth (Dan. iv. 35). Yet all the free actions of men have their places in his world-embracing plan. Man's actions may seem contingent; God's purposes are not. What he determines he can effect. 2. *The Divine instrumentality.* The foolishness of Rehoboam. Not that Rehoboam was under any internal or supernatural compulsion to act as he did any more than were Pharaoh (Exod. xiv. 4; Rom. ix. 17) and Judas (Matt. xxvi. 25) to act as they did. Simply, Jehovah decreed to permit Rehoboam's folly as a means of furthering his own designs. Divine sovereignty and human freedom not contradictory, though mysterious.

V. A NATIONAL REVOLT CONSUMMATED. (Vers. 16, 17.) 1. *With popular enthusiasm.* "All Israel," with the exception of those members of the northern kingdom who dwelt in Judæan cities, joined in the cry, "What portion have we in David," etc.? The unanimity of the movement showed that it was not without ground. 2. *With fierce indignation.* The cry which had once before been heard in Israel (2 Sam. xx. 1) expressed the people's sense of wrong in being cast off by Rehoboam, treated no longer as free subjects, but as conquered slaves. It proclaimed the deep-seated contempt they now cherished for the son of Jesse, as they now designate the dynasty of David. 3. *With implacable resentment.* "Struck by the king's words as by an iron hammer, and grieved at them," the people rejected his friendly overtures for reconciliation conveyed through Hadoram. If this was the son of David's tribute officer (2 Sam. xx. 24), he must have been at this time an old man about eighty. Hence he was probably the Adoniram, son of Abda, who was over the levy (1 Kings iv. 6). Though not likely that he advanced towards the people with a small force as if to enforce submission (Bertheau, Ewald), but rather that he approached them alone (Josephus), a more unfortunate selection of one to act as ambassador could scarcely have been made. Most likely one of the older counsellors who recommended moderation, Hadoram was yet the man who was "over the tribute," *i.e.* was the tax-collector of Rehoboam, and as such could hardly fail to be obnoxious to the angry multitude. Regarding him as an enemy, they sprang upon him with murderous fury: "they stoned him with stones till he died," thus inflicting on him a death usually reserved for traitors and blasphemers. This was the one dark spot which marked what would otherwise have been a bloodless revolution. 4. *With final decision.* The murder of his plenipotentiary convinced Rehoboam that the opportunity for parley was over, that fair speeches would no longer suffice to quell the insurrection, and that the revolt of Israel was an accomplished, most likely a permanent, fact. Mounting his chariot in haste, and with alarm for his safety, the king who had come to Shechem to obtain a crown returned to Jerusalem, having lost a kingdom.

LESSONS. 1. The danger of oppression (Eccles. vii. 7). 2. "In the multitude of counsellors is safety" (Prov. xi. 14), only when all are wise (Prov. xii. 5), and he who is counselled is not a fool (Prov. xii. 15). 3. He that hesitates is lost—exemplified in the case of Rehoboam. 4. The rashness of youth—shown in the second company of the king's advisers. 5. *Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.* 6. "Better is a wise child than a foolish king" (Eccles. iv. 13). 7. Good men often suffer for the sins of others, and even lose their lives when working for the good of others—illustrated in Hadoram. 8. Wicked men would often like to flee from the sight, and much more from the consequences, of their own wickedness.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

The first four verses of this chapter would have been better placed as the conclusion of the previous chapter. They correspond with 1 Kings xii. 21—24; and they tell how Rehoboam was restrained from making bad worse, in a hopeless attempt to recover the seceding ten tribes, by war that would have been as bloody as foredoomed to failure. "The word of the Lord" to this intent came to the Prophet Shemaiah, and through him to Rehoboam. The remaining verses of the chapter are new matter, and belong to Chronicles alone. They tell how Rehoboam set to work to fortify his towns, or rather many of them (vers. 5—12); how he received priests and others from the kingdom of the ten tribes (vers. 13—17); and, last and worst, of the wives and concubines he took (vers. 18—23).

Ver. 1.—He gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin. The parallel (1 Kings xii. 21) says more distinctly, "The house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin." They of Jeroboam (ch. x. 16) had flung it at Judah: "Now, David, see to thine own house." Rehoboam, of course, does this very thing. For the first time, *formally*, *Benjamin* is now introduced as throwing in its lot with Judah, and the acted prophecy of Ahijah is seen fulfilled; the chiefest of the tribes, and the tribe that came of the youngest and most petted of old Jacob's sons, are now wedded to the end. The tribe of Benjamin lay hemmed in between Ephraim, to which it had once much leaned, and to which (as Benjamin was the blood-uncle of Ephraim) it was more closely related, and Judah, with which it had once been at variance (2 Sam. ii. 12—32; iii. 1—27; xx. 1). But exactly on the border-line of Judah and Benjamin rose the city Jerusalem and the temple (Josh. xv. 8; xviii. 16; Jer. xx. 2); and, beyond doubt, this fact had helped to bring about the much more friendly feeling, if not absolutely close union, that now for some time had existed between these two tribes in their contiguous allotments. **A hundred and four-score thousand chosen men, which were warriors.** According to Joab, in David's time the men able to bear arms of Judah alone were five hundred thousand (2 Sam. xxiv. 9). Compare the numbers in the next reign (ch. xiii. 3), and, later on still, in Jehoshaphat's (ch. xvii. 14—18). Both of these show that Abijah and Jehoshaphat respectively had improved the time given to training much larger armies, whereas now Rehoboam was taken by surprise.

Ver. 2.—Shemaiah the man of God. This is the first historical mention (1 Kings xii. 22) of Shemaiah. The second is found in ch. xii. 5, 7, on occasion of the invasion of Judah and Jerusalem by Shishak King of Egypt; and the third, in the same chapter, ver. 15, that he wrote a book respecting the acts of Rehoboam. The expression, "man of God," owns to a somewhat unexplained history. It is first found in the added part of Deuteronomy (xxxiii. 1), where it is applied to Moses. It occurs once in Joshua (xiv. 6); twice in Judges (xiii. 6, 8); four times in Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 27; ix. 6—8); *twenty-nine* times in Kings; six times in Chronicles; once each in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Jeremiah.

Ver. 3.—To all Israel in Judah and Benjamin. There is difference of opinion as to who are intended in the expression, "all Israel," already confessedly ambiguous in two other passages. When we consider the mention of Rehoboam personally in the former clause of the verse, it would seem most probable that the meaning is all the people of the nation, resident in the Judah and Benjamin allotments, *i.e.* the nation called collectively Israel. This will include "the remnant" spoken of in the parallel (1 Kings xii. 23, compared with 17).

Ver. 4.—This thing is from me; *i.e.* the punishing disruption; not the precedent causes with the entirety of historical events; this punishing and witnessing disruption is not to be "lightly healed." The man who did what caused it, the men who did what caused it, cannot thus each undo what they have done—least of all undo it by the appeal of war. They and theirs will have, long as life lasts, as lives last, to go through the baptism of bitter suffering, and leave a heritage of the same for others.

Vers. 5—12.—These eight verses tell how Rehoboam, relieved of the responsibility of attempting to reconquer the revolted, wisely betakes himself to strengthening and defending what was left to him. He builds fifteen "fenced cities," or "cities for defence," twelve of them south and west of Jerusalem, for fear of Egypt; he fortifies certain strongholds, officering them, provisioning them, and supplying to them and "every several city" the necessary weapons of warfare and shields.

Ver. 6.—Bethlehem. This was a case not of actual new building of a city, but of restoring and strengthening it. Bethlehem, originally Ephrath (Gen. xxxv. 16; xlviii. 7), was one of the very oldest towns existent in Jacob's time. It was not called Bethlehem till long after the settlement of the tribes. It was six miles from Jerusalem, on the east of the road to Hebron. Etam. A place near Bethlehem (1 Chron. iv. 3, 4, *not* 32; Septuagint of Josh. xv. 60); possibly the resort of Samson after his revenge on the Philistines (Judg. xv. 8, 11). It was *not* the Etam mentioned as belonging to Simeon (1 Chron. iv. 32). Tekoa. According to Jerome, as also Eusebius, six Roman miles from Bethlehem, and nine from Jerusalem, or else, possibly by another road, twelve (Jerome's 'Procemium in Amos,' and his 'Onomasticon'). It is absent from the Hebrew catalogue of Judah towns (Josh. xv. 49), but is in the Septuagint Version of it. It was the place of the "wise woman" of 2 Sam. xiv. 2.

Ver. 7.—Beth-zur. About five miles north of Hebron (see Josh. xv. 58; 1 Chron. ii. 45; Neh. iii. 16). Shoco; properly, *Socoh*, in the Shefelah (Josh. xv. 35). According to Jerome and Eusebius, it was about nine miles from Eleutheropolis, on the road to Jerusalem (see also 1 Sam. xvii. 1). Adullam. In the Shefelah (Josh. xv. 35). It was an ancient place (Gen. xxxviii. 1, 12, 20; Josh. xii. 15; Neh. xi. 30). See also the familiar passages (1 Sam. xxii. 1; 2 Sam. xxiii. 13; 1 Chron. xi. 15).

Ver. 8.—Gath. Site still unknown. Some think it may be the Gath-rimmon of Dan (Josh. xix. 45). Otherwise it is Gath of the Philistines (Josh. xiii. 3; 1 Sam. vi. 17), and of Goliath (1 Sam. xvii. 4, 23). I. L. P., in Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 656, wishes to find it on a hill now called *Tel-es-Safieh*, on one side of the Plain of Philistia, about ten miles east of Ashdod and south-east of Ekron. See also "Topographical Index," p. 411, in Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' 2nd edit. Other interesting references are 1 Sam. xvii. 1, 52; xxi. 10; 1 Chron. xviii. 1; ch. xxvi. 6; 1 Kings ii. 39; 2 Kings xii. 17; Amos vi. 2. Mareshah. In the Shefelah (Josh. xv. 44), now *Marash*, a short distance south of Eleutheropolis. Zerah the Cushite came here when he was invading Judæa (ch. xiv. 9. See also ch. xx. 37; Micah i. 15). It was taken by John Hyrcanus, B.C. 110, and was demolished by the Parthians, B.C. 39. Ziph. Probably the present *Tel-Zif*, a little south-east of Hebron (Josh. xv. 55; see also 24. See also 1 Sam. xxiii. 14—24; xxvi. 2).

Ver. 9.—Adoraim. This name is not found anywhere else. The meaning of the word is "two heaps," and very probably describes the physical features of the site. It is probably the modern *Dura*. Its site is otherwise unknown. Lachish (see Josh. xv. 39; also x. 3; xii. 11); probably the modern *Um Lakis*, that lies on the road to Gaza. Other interesting references are 2 Kings xiv. 19; xviii. 14—17; xix. 8; Neh. xi. 30; Micah i. 13. Azekha (see Josh. xv. 35; also x. 10); it was in the Shefelah (see also 1 Sam.

xvii. 1; Neh. xi. 30; Jer. xxxiv. 7). The site of it is not identified.

Ver. 10.—**Zorah.** The people of Zorah, or Moreah, were the *Zareathites* of 1 Chron. ii. 53; it was the home of Manoah, and the native place of Samson (see Josh. xv. 33; xix. 41. Other interesting references are Judg. xiii. 25; xvi. 31; xviii. 2—11; Neh. xi. 29). It belonged to the original allotment of Dan, and is constantly named in company with Eshtaol. **Aijalon.** The modern *Jalo;* also originally belonged to allotment of Dan (Josh. x. 12; xix. 42; xxi. 24. Other interesting references are Judg. i. 35; 1 Sam. xiv. 31; 1 Kings xiv. 30; 1 Chron. vi. 66, 69; ch. xxviii. 18). **Hebron.** One of the most ancient of cities still lasting, rivalling in this respect Damascus. It belonged to Judah and to its hill country (Josh. xv. 54; xx. 7); it was about twenty Roman miles south of Jerusalem. Its original name was Kirjath Arba. In Numb. xiii. 22 it is said that it was built "seven years before Zoan in Egypt," but it is not said when Zoan was built. It now contains about five thousand population, but scarcely a tithe of them Jews. Its long stretch of history is full of incidents of interest, and is partially illustrated by the references that follow: Gen. xiii. 18; xxiii. 2—19, 20; xxxv. 27; xxxvii. 14; Numb. xiii. 22, 23; Josh. x. 36; xiv. 6—15; xv. 13, 14; xxi. 11—13; 2 Sam. iv. 12; v. 5; Neh. xi. 25.

Ver. 12.—**Having Judah and Benjamin on his side.** The mention of both tribes just serves to point for us the fact that Benjamin's existence and value were not absolutely ignored, but were for a short while quoted before the kingdom of Rehoboam became called by the name of Judah simply.

Ver. 13.—**The priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts.** The emphasis thrown into the contents of this verse is evident and agreeable; the ecclesiastical party acted worthily of itself. The priests and Levites could not bring themselves to offer sacrifice and service to the calves, or to forsake Jerusalem and the temple and the true altar. No doubt a stirring, throbbing history underlay the few but suggestive words which point here the conduct of the priests and Levites. These would not content to stand shoulder to shoulder with priests made not from the tribe of Levi (1 Kings xii. 31).

Ver. 14.—**Left their suburbs** (so Lev. xxv. 34; Numb. xxxv. 1, 3, 7; Josh. xiv. 4; xxi. 12). **Jeroboam . . . had cast them off.** This glimpse reveals to us, with exceeding probability, that there had been some struggle on the solemn matter; we may readily imagine that Jeroboam had either tried it on in vain with the true priests and Levites, or had learned very conclusively beforehand that it would be vain *to* try it on (ch xiii. 9).

Ver. 15.—**The high places;** *i.e.* Dan and Bethel (1 Kings xii. 28—33). **For the devils;** *i.e.* for the "hairy ones" (שְׂעִירִם). Reference is intended to the idolatrous worship of the "he-goats" by the Hebrews, after the example of Egypt, and the reference here is either literal or derived (Lev. xvii. 7). **For the calves** (see 1 Kings xii. 28).

Ver. 16 shows a good example on the part of the clergy, effectual, and *followed* by the people.

Ver. 17.—**Strengthened . . . three years.** "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but," etc. (Prov. xiv. 34; Isa. xxxiii. 6). The sad knell is sounded all too soon; see first verse of next chapter. Three years' strength will soon become weakness, and three years' goodness will save no soul.

Ver. 18.—The 'Speaker's Commentary' opportunely suggests the probability that we may be indebted here to Iddo's "genealogies" (ch. xii. 15). The word daughter here is a correction of the Keri, the Chethiv having been "son." This Jerimoth is the seventh out of a list of eight men of the same name mentioned in the two books of Chronicles. He is not given as one of the children of David's proper wives in either 1 Chron. iii. 1—8 or xiv. 4—7; Jerome says it was the Jewish tradition that he was the son of a concubine of David. It is just possible that Jerimoth and Ithream were two names of the same person. Abihail was second cousin of Mahalath. It is not quite clear whether Abihail were wife of Jerimoth and mother of Mahalath, or a second wife now mentioned of Rehoboam. The contents of the next verse not differencing the children there mentioned, and assigning her own to each wife of Rehoboam, if these were two wives of his, favours the former supposition (our Hebrew text being "and she bare," not "which bare"). When it is said that Abihail was the daughter of Eliab, the meaning probably is, as again in ver. 20, granddaughter. (For Eliab, see 1 Sam. xvi. 6; xvii. 13; 1 Chron. ii. 13.)

Ver. 19.—(See last note.) If previous verse speaks of two wives of Rehoboam, of which wife (our Hebrew text being not "which bare," but "and she bare") were Jeush, Shamariah, and Zaham the children? or of which respectively, if they express the children of both? As the words now stand, it can only be supposed, with all lexicons, that Abihail is mother of the three children on the two-wife supposition.

Ver. 20.—**Maachah** was the *granddaughter* of Absalom by his daughter Tamar, wife of Uriel (ch. xiii. 2; 1 Kings xv. 2).

Ver. 21.—Rehoboam was clearly wrong by Deut. xvii. 17 (note Solomon's Song vi. 8).

Ver. 22.—Cancel in this verse the italics "to be." Rehoboam again offends against the "Law" (see Deut. xxi. 15—17). He cannot justly plead as a precedent the instance of David and Solomon, as in 1 Chron. xxiii. 1; for this was only justified by the express Divine ordinance, as in 1 Chron. xxii. 9; xxix. 1.

Ver. 23.—The wise dealing of Rehoboam, fourfold (weakening his children by division, giving them each employment, giving them also abundance of victual, and—as is probably the meaning, though not said so either here or in the Septuagint—finding for them many wives), will not, though it were forty-fold, avail to cover his "despising" of the "Law." Rather his *wise dealing* is an indication that his conscience was not quite at ease, and that he knew he was wrong. Nothing is so liable to blind judgment as personal affection.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4, 5—17, and 23.—*The discipline that resulted in obedience, accompanied with right and earnest endeavour.* The homiletic treatment of this chapter centres round two suggestions.

I. THE SIMPLE AND PROMPT OBEDIENCE OF REHOBOAM, IN CERTAIN RESPECTS, TO THE DIVINE MESSAGE OF PROHIBITION. Of which obedience on the part of Rehoboam we may notice: 1. *That it compared favourably with the conduct of those who, being bidden and encouraged in every way to go up to war, and to possess a certain goodly land, refused; and, being commanded not to go up, insisted on going* (Deut. i. 26, 43), *to their discomfiture and defeat.* 2. *That the mere pride of war must have gone far to make such obedience difficult.* 3. *That the somewhat juster pride of earnest desire to undo, if possible, his own mischievous doing, and to restore a united nation, must have contributed still further to the difficulty of that obedience.* 4. *And it is very possible that a sensitive shame in the presence of those young counsellors who had helped to mislead him, but who for certain never offered to help bear the blame of the consequences, may have added some contribution to the difficulty of obedience.* Yet Rehoboam's obedience was apparently prompt and unquestioning. Terrible recent experience had not been thrown away, but had so far gained some wisdom for him. And the prophet's distinct announcement that the Lord had recognized and adopted the situation as one for his intervening and overruling providence, must have lent consolation to a truly penitent disposition, saved from remorse had there been tendency thereto, while in no way palliating the sin of either king or people.

II. THE EARNEST AND RIGHT ENDEAVOURS OF REHOBOAM TO SHEPHERD ALL THE BETTER HIS LESSER FLOCK, HIS REDUCED KINGDOM. This was witnessed to in three leading and typical directions. 1. *Rehoboam uses all the means of an outward kind that may "strengthen the things that remain."* Cities, and fences, and strongholds, and forts, and stores of food, and all armour are seen to and supplied. 2. *It was of deeper significance that he received only too gladly, welcomed out of a true faith then at least, all the priests and Levites who found indeed that Israel was not the place and Jeroboam not the master for them.* To have the recognition of religion, the faith of religion, the presence of the practical ministries and ministers of religion, is the salt of the earth, the health of a people, the conserving of the soundness of civil society. Sin, and a grievous tale of it, were the woe of even Judah; but its core was never quite unsound, and its perpetuity was never broken; while rottenness was the very core of Israel, and Jeroboam and their staff was to be broken absolutely. 3. *The true, the devout, the pious of the country, those who "set their hearts to seek the Lord God," were likewise received and welcomed at the true altar, at Jerusalem the city of the great King, with their sacrifices and offerings, following in the steps of their priests and ministers.* We can imagine them pouring up to the city of their solemnities, like the regular health-bringing waters of some tidal river for Judah, who often mourned and was desolate and bereaved; but for themselves, to the drawing of fresh spiritual life, deeper faith, added strength of hope, kindled joy and love, as they offered their sacrifices, paid their vows, and frequented their temple. People and king were strengthened, as thus "they walked in the way of David and Solomon." We could wish it were written without the ominous, ill-sounding qualification of "three years." These things are certainly very observable of Rehoboam at this time, that a remarkable change had come over, not the spirit of his dream, but of his real working life. We hear no more of his young counsellors. They had been found out, and now were no longer clung to, even as "favourites" to whom royalty iniquitously insisted on showing partiality. We recognize no further indications of the hectoring and insolent spirit in which Rehoboam had allowed himself to answer the not unreasonable representations of those who had addressed him on the subject of lightening their acknowledged burdens. We learn of his desire and the beginning of his preparation to attempt to recover the nevertheless irrecoverable. He is divinely prohibited, and that, no doubt, to the saving of greater harm. He acquiesces in the prohibition, and with intensified zeal applies himself to the care of his diminished dominions. He would defend them from outer assault; and they are also the resort and the refuge and the religious home they should be, for all the upright in all the land. From our sight in this one chapter Rehoboam vanishes, emulating steadily for three years the best portions of the examples of his fathers David and Solomon. Unhappily, the end was not yet.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—***Fighting against brethren.*** Rehoboam might have alleged some very strong reasons in defence of the proposed war (ver. 1). He might have pleaded that the tribes had no constitutional or moral right to revolt and secede, and that their secession would seriously and even fatally weaken Israel, and expose it to the mercy of her powerful and unscrupulous neighbours. But the word of the Lord came authoritatively to him, "Ye shall not go up," etc., and the strife was stayed. These words may teach or remind us of—

I. THE UNSEEMLINESS OF DOMESTIC STRIFE. It is not only such murderous violence as darkened the history of the first human family, and such bitter strife as that which too often divides brothers and sisters into plaintiffs and defendants; it is also the unforgiven offence, or the interminable dispute, which keeps their lives apart, or makes cold the hearts that should be warm with love; and it is also the daily bickerings, accusations, contentions, which come beneath the Divine displeasure. It is not only the presence of strife, it is the absence of love; it is the want of kindness, considerateness, charity, sweetness of look and of tone, which gives dissatisfaction to him who is ever saying, "As I have loved you, love one another."

II. THE PAINFUL INCONGRUITY OF CHURCH DISSENSIONS. Apart from all ecclesiastical controversy, in regard to which there may be honest difference of opinion and of action without any real bitterness of heart, there is often found within the borders of the same Christian community a difference which hardens into a dissension. It is here that the strong, decisive command, against which is no appeal, should be heard, "Ye shall not fight against your brethren." We may not be able to define in language the exact difference between allowable and honourable and even commendable defence of the true and wise in Christian thought and method on the one hand, and a reprehensible and unchristian dissension on the other hand. But if "our eye be single," and our Master's cause be dearer to our heart than our own preferences, we shall know where the difference lies, and we shall heed the prohibition of the text, and the injunction of the apostle, "Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. v. 13).

III. THE PECULIAR INIQUITY OF FRATRICIDAL WAR. How pitiful the sight of the armies of Judah arrayed against the armies of Israel; the children of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob seeking one another's life, shedding one another's blood! The people of God turning their weapons against each other, weakening the forces of righteousness, helping to extinguish the light that was in the world. Well might the prophetic word be uttered, "Ye shall not fight," etc. The Divine Father of the human family has, since then, looked down on many a sad and shameful fratricidal war—wars in which father and son, brother and brother, have met in deadly contest on the battlefield; wars in which the hearts of those united by the strongest bonds have been inflamed against one another by the fiercest passions. Surely negotiation and concession should be carried to the very last conceivable point before men "go up and fight against their brethren." But it may be said that the words point to—

IV. THE WRONGNESS OF ALL WAR THAT IS ANYWISE AVOIDABLE. And so, indeed, they do. For are we not all brethren? are we not all "members one of another"?

Are we not, whatever our nationality may be, children of the same heavenly Father, possessors of the same spiritual nature, fellow-sufferers from the same great spiritual malady, fellow-strugglers against the same spiritual foes, fellow-travellers to the same solemn future? May we not all be the redeemed of the same Divine Saviour, workers in the same holy fields of usefulness, occupants of the same heavenly home? Is it well that we who are brethren, that we who, beneath our superficial distinctions, are so closely and deeply united to one another, that *we* should be planning one another's destruction, be rejoicing in one another's discomfiture, be exercising our utmost art and putting forth our utmost skill to shed one another's blood? To all those who would enter lightly or needlessly into war, comes the strong and solemn prohibition, "Ye shall not fight against your brethren."—C.

Ver. 4.—*Wrought of God.* "For this thing is done of me." How much has God to do with the events and issues of our life? Speaking in the idiom of the ancient Hebrew writers, we should say—Everything. Speaking after our modern fashion, we should say—*Much;* and so much that we are altogether wrong and foolish if we do not take it into account. The words of the text, together with the context, suggest—

I. THAT GOD DOES MANY THINGS WHICH, ANTECEDENTLY, WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT HE WOULD DO. Who would have expected, apart from his own warnings, that he would bring about the rupture in the kingdom of Israel? How very preferable, in many ways, does it seem to us that that little kingdom should remain united and strong instead of becoming divided and weak! We should have thought that the Divine wisdom would devise some other punishment for Solomon's vain-gloriousness and defection, for Rehoboam's childish folly, than that which the text tells us was wrought of him; there might have been, we should say, some personal humiliation or some temporary national calamity from which it would soon have revived. But so it was not to be. And though it may yet remain inexplicable, it is certain that this rending of the kingdom in twain was "of God." In the history of our race, in the course of Christianity, we have witnessed or have read of the same thing. Sometimes it has been in the *fate of institutions.* God has let some prosper that we should have expected him to bring to ruin, and others he has allowed to perish that we should have expected his interposition to save. And many times it has been the *lives of men.* How often have we wondered that the bad and baneful life has not been shortened, that the noble and valuable life has not been spared! How difficult it has been to believe that this thing and that thing were "done of him"! Yet we know that the guilty do not live one day longer than he permits, and we know that "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." We believe, though we cannot see, that God's hand is on all the springs of human life, that he is directing everything, and that those issues which at the time, or long after the time, seemed strange and deplorable, will prove to have been kind and wise and just.

II. THAT THE GUILTY SHOULD ASCRIBE TO HIM THE ISSUES OF THEIR FOLLY. Rehoboam's senseless behaviour at Shechem had obviously much to do with the political disaster that followed. Yet Divine righteousness had so much to do with it that God said, "This thing is done of me." Crime, vice, folly, sin, work out their issues in poverty, shame, sorrow, death. The moralist stands over the fallen culprit and says, not untruly, "You have brought this upon yourself; it is your own guilty hand that has brought you to the ground." Yet, with equal truth, and perhaps with greater wisdom and kindness, the prophet of the Lord comes to him and says, "This end of evil is of God; he has brought it about; it is the mark of his Divine displeasure; it is a summons to another and a better course." Conversely, we may add—

III. THAT THE GOOD SHOULD, AND DO, ATTRIBUTE TO HIM THE RESULTS OF THEIR ENDEAVOURS. If it is the action of God's righteous laws, and in that way the working of his hand, that sin ends in misery and ruin, so is it on the other side. It is the outworking of Divine beneficence, it is the result of his wisdom and goodness, it is the consequence of his action, direct and indirect, that the fields are white unto the harvest, that the trees in the Master's vineyard are bringing forth fruit, that the young people are growing up into wisdom and spiritual comeliness, that character is ripening for the heavenly garner, that life is opening out into immortality. "This thing," also, "is of him."—C.

Vers. 13—18.—*Fidelity to conscience.* This migration of priests and people from the other tribes of Israel to Judah and Jerusalem was a serious event in the history of the people of God, and it presents a striking and suggestive spectacle to all time. It is an early illustration of fidelity to conscience.

I. THE SEVERITY OF THE STRUGGLE. These servants of Jehovah, priests and people, had to triumph over great obstacles in order to take the step on which they decided. They had: 1. To set at nought the commandments of the king. This was a more serious thing then than it would be now; it meant more rebelliousness in action, and it involved more danger to the person. 2. To cut themselves adrift from old and sacred associations. They had to forsake their neighbours and (many of them, no doubt) their relatives; many had to leave their vocation or, at any rate, its exercise in familiar spots and among old and early acquaintances; they had to make little of those sentiments of which it is in our human heart to make much. 3. To sacrifice material advantages. Of the Levites we read that they "left their suburbs and their possession" (ver. 14); and we may be sure that those who were not Levites, and who, consequently, would have a much greater interest in the occupancy and holding of the land (Deut. x. 9), made still greater sacrifices than they. The families must have gone forth "not knowing the things that would befall them," but knowing that they would encounter serious loss and discomfort, and would miss much which they had been accustomed to possess and to enjoy.

II. THE WISDOM OF THEIR CHOICE. 1. They pleased God. God would accept and honour their fidelity, which was an act of faithfulness and obedience to himself. 2. They retained their self-respect. This they would not have done if they had conformed to the false rites which Jeroboam had instituted and on which he was insisting; in that case they would have sunk far and fast spiritually, and would soon have lost all hold upon the truth. For we cannot dishonour the truth in the eyes of men and retain our own appreciation of it. 3. They took a course which ennobled them—a course by which they not only became entitled to the honour of their countrymen, but by which they committed themselves definitely to the service of God and confirmed their own faith in him. They did that for which their children and their children's children would "call them blessed" and noble. 4. They added materially to the strength of the kingdom which bore witness to the truth (ver. 17), and helped to make durable its godly institutions. 5. They became located where they could take part in the worship of God according to the requirements of their own conscience. Setting their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, they came where they could "sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers" (ver. 16). They lost much temporal, but they gained much spiritual advantage. They sowed "not to the flesh, but to the Spirit." They left houses of brick behind them, but they came where they could build up the house of a holy character, of a noble and useful life. There are those in Christian lands who do not likewise, but otherwise. For some temporal considerations they leave the home where there is everything to illumine the mind and enlarge the spirit and enrich the soul, and go where all this is absent. Doubtless the removal from one town to another is an action in which many motives may and should have their force, but let spiritual considerations have a *great* weight in the balance.—C.

Vers. 18—23.—*Spiritual admixture.* After reading the first fourteen verses of the last chapter (ch. x.), we hardly expect to come across the words, concerning Rehoboam, "and he dealt wisely" (ver. 23). But this king, though he could certainly be very foolish, was not all folly; like most men, he was a spiritual admixture. We look at—

I. THE SINGULAR SPIRITUAL ADMIXTURE WE FIND IN HIM. The account we have of him is not a long one; it is contained in two or three short chapters, but in these we count seven wise and four foolish actions. We find him (see above) very wise in taking time and in consulting others before giving an important decision on a critical occasion; most foolish in heeding the counsel of the young men; foolish in sending his minister that "was over the tribute" amongst those who were complaining bitterly of their taxation (ch. x. 18); wise in hearkening to and heeding the Divine prohibition of war (ver. 4); wise in fortifying and storing the strongholds on the frontier (vers. 5—12); wise in welcoming to Judah the priests and people whom Jeroboam had driven away; very foolish indeed in "desiring many wives" (ver. 23) and in establishing so large a harem (ver. 21); wise in choosing so many from the stock of David and in dispersing his sons about his small kingdom, where they could not quarrel among themselves, but be of some service to him; wise in "walking in the way of David" (ver. 17); foolish in departing therefrom after three years of obedience.

II. THE SPIRITUAL ADMIXTURE THERE IS IN US. We find that good men have: 1. Those virtues and failings which seem to go together. They have, as we say, "the faults of their virtues." With much strength and earnestness goes severity in the judgment of other people; with much meekness goes inactivity; with much vivacity and picturesqueness of style goes laxity, if not unveraciousness; with much good-naturedness goes carelessness, etc. 2. Failings which do not naturally accompany virtues. Of some good man whose general integrity we cordially acknowledge, whose excellency and usefulness (perhaps) we even admire, we have to admit reluctantly that he is very vain, or very proud, or very blunt, or very careless; or we have to confess that there is some other defect in his character, perhaps more than one shortcoming. In truth, we have to confront the truths, viz.: 1. That Christian character is an admixture. It is good not unmarked with evil; it is rectitude not without some occasional swerving to the right hand or to the left; it is rather an earnest aspiration or an honest and devout endeavour than a complete attainment; it is a battle that will end in victory, but it is not (yet) the victory; it is a race, and not the runner clasping the goal and receiving the prize. 2. That it behoves us to take heed how we judge. One failing does not unchristianize a character; it is what is in the depth, and not what is on the surface, that decides our position; the "spirit we are of," and not the proprieties of behaviour. 3. That we do well to consider how much alloy is mixed with the pure gold of our own character.—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*A warlike expedition hindered.* I. THE KING'S ARMY. 1. *Whence collected.* From Judah and Benjamin, or that portion of the latter which adhered to Judah. 2. *Its place of rendezvous.* Jerusalem, the metropolis of the southern kingdom. It was intended that the king's forces should proceed from the capital. 3. *The number of its force.* A hundred and eighty thousand men—a contingent of the army of Judah. 4. *The character of its soldiers.* "Chosen *men,* which were warriors;" picked veterans, because of the importance and difficulty of the expedition upon which they were about to be despatched. 5. *The work for which it was designed.* "To fight against Israel"—against the ten or nine and a half northern tribes who had lately belonged to the same empire with them, and were still of the same race. 6. *The ultimate aim of the expedition.* To reduce Israel to subjection. Politically viewed, it was not wrong to aim at the conquest of Israel; only Rehoboam would have done well had he sat down calmly and considered whether he was able, with the help of one or two tribes at most, to overcome ten, with a population vastly larger and equally inured to war with those acknowledging his sway (Luke xiv. 32). Religiously examined, it is not so certain Rehoboam was pursuing a legitimate aim, seeing that under him, no less than under his father, the unbroken empire had forsaken Jehovah and declined into idolatries, which declension, besides, was the primal cause of the disruption that had taken place.

II. JEHOVAH'S INTERDICT. 1. *Through whom conveyed.* "Shemaiah the man of God." This prophet appears to have belonged to Judah (ch. xii. 15), and resided in Jerusalem; unlike Ahijah, whose home was in Ephraim (1 Kings xi. 29). 2. *To whom delivered.* "Rehoboam . . . King of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin." The Divine message was no doubt spoken in the palace to the king and his princes, and through them published to the assembled warriors. 3. *In what terms issued.* (1) A prohibition: "Ye shall not go up" upon this expedition, "nor fight against your brethren; (2) a command: "Return every man to his house;" and (3) a reason: "For this thing is done of me," saith the Lord. Thus to Rehoboam by Shemaiah, as to Jeroboam through Ahijah, was the intimation given that the disruption of the kingdom exactly accorded with the Divine purpose. 4. *How received.* In submission and with obedience. Whether this prompt compliance with Heaven's will was due, on the part of Rehoboam, his princes, and his army, to religion, humanity, or worldly policy, is not said by the Chronicler. They may have felt it would be dangerous to fight against God; or been touched by the consideration that the Israelites were, after all, their brethren; or calculated that prudence would be the better part of valour, seeing it was not self-evident they would succeed in their enterprise.

LESSONS. 1. The sinfulness of war, especially of civil war. 2. The paramount authority of God in civil and political, no less than in private and religious, affairs. 3. The presence of God's finger in all social and national movements, in the establishment and overthrow of kings, in the permitting or hindering (as his wisdom determines) of civil strife, etc. 4. The wisdom of obeying God.—W.

Vers. 5—17.—*The strengthening of a kingdom.* I. THE ERECTION OF FORTRESSES. (Vers. 5—12.) 1. *Their object.* To defend the frontiers of the kingdom, against both Israel on the north and Egypt on the south, for which last special need existed, considering the friendly relations which had subsisted between Jeroboam and Shishak. Shishak's invasion, which soon followed, showed Rehoboam's apprehensions not to have been baseless. Though wars are seldom justifiable, it is never wrong or unwise on the part of a prudent monarch to consult for the protection of his country and people. 2. *Their names.* (1) In the land of Judah. (*a*) On the southern frontier: *Bethlehem*, mentioned in Jacob's time (Gen. xxxv. 19), two hours south of Jerusalem, the birthplace of David and of Christ (1 Sam. xvi. 1; Micah v. 1; Matt. ii. 5, 11), now *Beit-Lahm*. *Etam*, a town probably between Bethlehem and *Tekoa*, the present village *Urtâs*, south of Bethlehem, near which is the spring called *'Ain Atân*. Tekoa, now *Tekua*, "on the summit of a hill covered with ancient ruins, two hours south of Bethlehem" (Keil). Beth-zur (Josh. xv. 58), a town on the watershed, identified with the modern *Beth-sur*, a ruin midway between Urtâs and Hebron. (*b*) On the western boundary towards the Philistines: *Soco* (Josh. xv. 35), the present *Shuweike* in Wady Sumt, three hours and a half south-west from Jerusalem. *Adullam* (Josh. xv. 35), a very old Canaanitish town, that lay in the so-called Shephelah, or lowland, of Judah, probably to be identified with the present *Deir Dubbân*, two hours north of Eleutheropolis. *Gath*, one of the five chief towns of the Philistines (Josh. xiii. 3), first subjected to the Israelites by David (1 Chron. xviii. 1), and under Solomon ruled by its own king, who paid tribute to the Israelitish throne (1 Kings ii. 39); according to the 'Onomasticon,' situated five Roman miles from Eleutheropolis, on the road to Diospolis; otherwise not yet identified, though Conder looks for it in the direction of Tell-es-Sâfi. *Mareshah* (Josh. xv. 44), near to which Asa defeated the Ethiopian king Zerah (ch. xiv. 9), according to Eusebius, lay two Roman miles from, and in all probability is to be sought for in, the ruin *Merâsh*, twenty-four minutes south of Beit Jibrîn (Eleutheropolis). *Adoram*, shortened into Dora (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xiv. 5. 3), is the present-day *Dûra*, a village seven miles and a half west of Hebron, surrounded by olive-groves and corn-fields (Robinson). *Lachish*, in the lowland of Judah (Josh. xv. 39), is probably the present ruin *Lakis*, three miles west-south-west from Beit Jibrîn, situated "on a circular height covered with ancient walls and marble fragments, and overgrown with thistles and bushes" (Robinson, Ritter, Keil; Pressel in Herzog, viii. 157; Reihm, i. 876), though Conder prefers to find it in *Tell-el-hesy*, near Eglon. *Azekah* (Josh. xv. 35), east of Ephes-dammim (1 Sam. xvii. 1), has not been discovered. (*c*) On the border of the Edomites: *Hebron*, originally Kirjath-arba, *i.e.* the city of Arba, "a great man among the Anakims" (Josh. xiv. 15; xv. 13; xxi. 11), afterwards a settlement of the patriarchs (Gen. xxiii. 2; xxxv. 27), now called *El-Khalil*, "the friend of God," in the hill country of Judah, seven hours from Jerusalem, one of the oldest towns of which we possess knowledge, having been "built seven years before Zoan in Egypt" (Numb. xiii. 22). *Ziph*, probably in the hill country of Judah (Josh. xv. 55), to be looked for in the present ruin *Tell Ziph*, an hour and a quarter south-east of Hebron. (2) In the land of Benjamin, as a protection against the north. *Zorah* (Josh. xv. 33), not Samson's birthplace (Judg. xiii. 2), represented by the ruin *Sura*, ten Roman miles from Eleutheropolis, on the road to Nicopolis, but a place lying on a high peak of the northern slope of the Wâdi-Sorar. *Aijalon*, the present village of *Jalo*, on the verge of the plain Merj-ibn-Omeir, four leagues west of Gibeon. These last-named towns belonged originally to Dan, but after the disruption of the kingdom they appear to have fallen to the tribe of Benjamin. 3. *The equipment of these strongholds.* Captains were appointed, provisions laid up, and shields and spears stored up in every city (ver. 11).

II. THE REFORMATION OF RELIGION. (Vers. 13—17.) 1. *The priests and Levites out of all Israel returned to the temple.* The occasion of this falling away from Jeroboam was that he and his sons had practically renounced the religion of Jehovah, had set up "high places" of his own in Dan and Bethel, where Jehovah was worshipped in the form of two ox-images, or golden calves, in imitation, most likely, of the images of Apis and Mnevis in Egypt, or of the "calf" made by Aaron in the wilderness, the notion of which doubtless was also borrowed from Egypt (1 Kings xii. 28). These calves and other images of animals the Chronicler calls *she'irim* (Hebrew), "devils" (Authorized Version), "he-goats" or "satyrs" (Revised Version), after which the Israelites had gone a-whoring in Egypt (Josh. xxiv. 14), and even in the wilderness (Lev. xvii. 7; Amos v. 25, 26). "In later times they appear to have connected with it [this worship] notions of goblins, in the form of goats, who haunted the wilderness and laid in wait for women" (Gerlach). Jeroboam, then, having set up this rival form of worship, had no further use for the regularly ordained priests and Levites, unless they would conform to the new cultus; and because they would not, he cast them out from their offices and would no more allow them "to sacrifice unto the Lord." It says a good deal for their conscientiousness and courage that, rather than renounce what they believed to be the true religion, or worship God otherwise than according to their consciences, they cheerfully abandoned "their suburbs and possession"—in modern phraseology, their residences and emoluments; Scotticè, their manses and glebes. They were the first nonconformists in the northern kingdom. 2. *The pious worshippers of Jehovah out of all Israel returned to Jerusalem.* These are described: (1) By their characters. "Such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel." The essence of all religion is "to seek the Lord God of Israel," in whose favour is life, and whose "loving-kindness is better than life" (Ps. xxx. 5; lxiii. 3), the knowledge of whom is also life eternal (John xvii. 2). Nor can God be sought unless with the heart as distinguished from the mind, and with the whole as contrasted with a divided heart (ch. xv. 12; Ps. cxix. 2, 10; Jer. xxix. 13). And even this is impossible without determination, energy, and perseverance on the part of him who desires to be religious (Ps. ix. 1; 2 Kings x. 31; Acts xi. 33). (2) By their worship. They "came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers." True religion cannot subsist alongside of false worship. A serious mistake it is to suppose that any form of expression will suffice as an outlet for pious feeling. God must be approached and served in the way and through the forms he has himself prescribed. 3. *Rehoboam and his princes returned to the service of Jehovah.* (1) Their reformation was probably sincere so far as it went. But (2) it did not go far enough. They did not abandon entirely the idol-worship of Solomon, but conjoined with it the service of Jehovah. And (3) it was of short duration, lasting only three years (ver. 17), *i.e.* so long as the fright of invasion was on them, but disappearing when all fear on that score was at an end (ch. xii. 1).

Learn: 1. The worthlessness to a kingdom of fortresses without religion. 2. The worthlessness to a person of religion without sincerity and truth. 3. The worthlessness to a state of a king without a God. 4. The worthlessness to either state or individual of goodness that is not permanent.—W.

Vers. 18—23.—*A royal polygamist.* I. REHOBOAM'S WIVES. 1. *The number of them.* In all eighteen wives and sixty concubines. Solomon had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines (1 Kings xi. 3). David even had more wives and concubines than was good for him (2 Sam. iii. 2—5; v. 13; xii. 8). Oriental monarchs generally had well-filled harems. Rameses II. had a hundred and nineteen children (sixty sons and fifty-nine daughters), "which gives ground for supposing a great number of concubines, besides his lawful wives" (Brugsch, vol. ii. p. 115). Polygamy was also permitted to, and practised by, the monarchs of Assyria, whose palaces accordingly were guarded by a whole army of eunuchs (Sayce, 'Assyria, its Princes, Priests, and People,' p. 129). 2. *The chief of them.* (1) "Mahalath, the daughter of David's son Jerimoth," who was probably a son of one of David's concubines, as Jerimoth is wanting in the list of David's sons (1 Chron. iii. 1—8); "Abihail, the daughter of Eliab, the son of Jesse" (1 Chron. ii. 13), is not a second wife of Rehoboam's (LXX.), as the words "which bare" (ver. 19) and "after her" (ver. 20) show, but Mahalath's mother, who was thus David's niece, as Mahalath's father was David's grands-

Mahalath was probably the first wedded of Rehoboam's spouses. (2) "Maachah, the daughter of Absalom." Called also "Micaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah" (ch. xiii. 2), or of Abishalom (1 Kings xv. 2), Maachah was probably the daughter of Tamar, whose husband was the above Uriel or Abishalom, and whose father was Absalom (2 Sam. xiv. 27). If Mahalath was the first of Rehoboam's wives, Maachah was the favourite, probably on account of beauty and fascinating manners inherited from her grandfather (2 Sam. xiv. 25; xv. 6).

II. REHOBOAM'S CHILDREN. 1. *The number of his sons.* Twenty-eight, among whom were (1) the sons of Mahalath, nowhere else mentioned, "Jeush, Shamariah, and Zaham," men not distinguished for their own sakes, and hardly worthy of further notice for their father's sake; and (2) the sons of Maachah, "Abijah, or Abijam (1 Kings xv. 1), and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith," of whom only the first emerged from obscurity. Rehoboam's daughters are not named, but only numbered. In those days woman had not attained the place which was her due, and which has since been assigned her by Christianity. 2. *The favourite amongst his sons.* Abijah. Though not the firstborn, Rehoboam designated him as successor to the throne, no doubt to the injury and displeasure of the firstborn; but in doing so, if he obeyed not the Law (Deut. xxi. 16), he at least followed the example of David, who preferred Bathsheba's son Solomon to the throne, instead of his firstborn, Amnon the son of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess. He also made Abijah ruler among his brethren, set him at their head, appointed him as governor over them in the various state offices they held, and entrusted to him the crown treasures and the strongest cities (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 10. 1). 3. *The treatment of his other sons.* He "dealt wisely" with them. (1) He dispersed them abroad among the different garrison cities, giving them commands in these, so that by their separation from one another and their occupation with military duties they might have neither time nor opportunity to conspire with Jeroboam, or any other monarch, against Abijah or himself. (2) He provided for them abundant maintenance, *i.e.* a living suitable to their princely rank, so that no temptation to discontent might assail them. Rehoboam probably knew that if his sons had their bellies well filled their souls would be at ease. (3) He sought for them many wives. Whether these were chosen out of the different districts where the sons held commands, in order to bring his sons into closer connection with the inhabitants of the same (Ewald, 'History of Israel,' vol. iv. p. 47), the certainty is that the practice of polygamy in which he encouraged them would not tend to increase their warlike energy.

LESSONS. 1. The misery as well as sin of polygamy, leading as it does to divided affections and unjustifiable partialities. 2. The duty of dealing wisely with children, but not after the fashion of Rehoboam.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

This chapter finishes for us the history of Rehoboam, his "acts" and his character; and, with the preceding two chapters, it may be counted among the masterpieces of Scripture biography. In so short a compass, how well marked, how distinctly limned, are the features of the man! The name of Rehoboam is, undoubtedly, one of the more important, if not taking rank among the most important, of Scripture, and no one can rise from the study of the fifty-eight verses of these three chapters without a very satisfactory conception of the man Rehoboam and what he was. It will be seen from the language of the second verse, compared with ch. xi. 17, that, roughly speaking, this chapter stretches over the last sad and evil twelve of the whole seventeen years of Rehoboam's reign. This, however, does not negative the possibility of the anticipation in ch. xi. of what, in point of chronology, belongs to this ch. xii. The parallel of this chapter is 1 Kings xiv. 21—31, which gives us more than our vers. 1, 6, 12, 14, of what is personal to the evil-doing of Rehoboam, but much less than our text respecting Shishak and his army, and Shemaiah and his messages.

Ver. 1.—**When Rehoboam had established the kingdom . . . strengthened himself;** *i.e.* while insecure and full of apprehensions, Rehoboam walked humbly and surely, but when he thought his object, simply *safety*, was gained, his true and worse self appeared or reappeared, and, clothed with self-confidence, he forsakes the "Law," to bring sure retribution on himself. **All Israel with him.** When we turn to the fuller statements of the parallel (1 Kings xiv. 22—24), we see that the sins that were at work were not those of king merely, but of people, especially in abominations such as those of sodomy and the immoral practices of the "groves," as well as the ecclesiastical and irreligious iniquities of "high places" and "image" worship!

Ver. 2.—Shishak; Hebrew, שִׁישַׁק; Septuagint, Σουσάκιμ; Shishak, Sheshonk, Sesonchis, the Sheshenk I. or Shashank I. of the monuments, son of an Assyrian king called Nimrod or Nemaruth, became King of Egypt as first of six kings who lasted in all a hundred and seventy years, of the twenty-second dynasty of Manetho, reigning in Bubastis. To him Jeroboam had fled for refuge from Solomon (1 Kings xi. 40). He reigned An. Sac. 3830 (B.C. 980) to 3851 or 3863. This makes Solomon's reign A.S. 3799 (B.C. 1011) to 3839 (B.C. 971). Shishak's invasion, therefore, in aid of Jeroboam, was A.S. 3844 (B.C. 966). A representation of it exists in relief sculptured on the south external wall of the temple of Amon, at Karnak, Thebes; and, together with this, an elaborate list of countries, cities, tribes, conquered by Sheshenk or tributary to him, a hundred and thirty-three in number. Among these are some of the very fifteen fenced cities (see our ver. 4) which Rehoboam built or fortified, viz. the three, Shoco, Adoraim, and Aijalon, while the erasure of fourteen names just where these are found accounts, no doubt, for the non-appearance of others of them. There are also the names of Levitical and Canaanite cities, situated in the kingdoms of the ten tribes, but belonging to the Levites who had been compelled to migrate into Judah. The dates given above are those accepted by Conder, in his 'Handbook to the Bible' (see pp. 28—34), and do not quite agree with those adopted in Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1287—1294. Both of these most interesting articles will well repay perusal, as well as the article "Thebes" in the latter work, iii. 1471—1475. (The name and word *Shishak* has no relation whatever with the *Sheshach* of Jer. xxv. 26; li. 41, שֵׁשַׁךְ, a word which, possibly spelling *Babel* or even *Ur*, marks the name of a place, and is evidently used by Jeremiah for Babylon or Babylonia.)

Ver. 3.—Twelve hundred chariots. The parallel does not give the numbers. These are large, but not inconsistent with those mentioned in other connections, whether those of Solomon, or, going further back, of Pharaoh. **Lubims.** The letter *s* is orthographically redundant in this, as also in the following names, the forms being already plural. The *Lubim* mean the Libyans, west of Egypt. They are probably the people represented on the Egyptian monuments as *Lebu*, of Semitic type, subjugated by Egypt's kings in the thirteenth century B.C. They were among the oldest of colonists, that drifted along the coast of Africa, north of the Great Desert, from the East, and are perhaps the same as the Lehabim (Gen. x. 13; ch. xvi. 8; Nah. iii. 9; Dan. xi. 43; Jer. xlvi. 9; Ezek. xxxviii. 5). **Sukkiims.** Probably an Arab tribe, though the Septuagint Version gives Τρωγοδύται, as though taking them for Troglodytes in the hills west of the Red Sea; so, too, the Vulgate. Gesenius at once renders the סֻכִּיִּים tent-dwellers, and sets the people in question down for some African tribe. They are not mentioned elsewhere so as to be recognized. **Ethiopians.** These were ethnically Cushites, but the territorial application of the term was confined to the African Cushite settlers. It is remarkable that, in ch. xxi. 16, Ethiopians are classed with Arabians, but otherwise with African peoples, and in particular Egypt (Ps. lxviii. 31; Isa. xx. 3, 4; xliii. 3; xlv. 14; Jer. xlvi. 9; Ezek. xxx. 5; xxxviii. 5). They were many-tribed, and the Sabæans were a leading tribe of them. It is evident that Shishak could draw from a large and varied dominion subject to his dynasty at this time.

Ver. 5.—Shemaiah (see Exposition, ch. xi. 2). **The princes.** These seem to have been a fruit of some original organization with Solomon, as they are not found with David (1 Kings iv. 2—6). **Ye have forsaken me . . . therefore have I also left you.** The same Hebrew verb is employed in both members of this sentence, and the rendering should follow in like manner (see ch. vii. 19—22).

Ver. 6.—Note, as very apt parallel passages, Jer. xiii. 15, 18; Exod. ix. 27.

Ver. 7.—Some deliverance. The Hebrew for "some" here is כִּמְעַט. There is plain authority (Ruth ii. 7; Ps. xxxviii. 10) for translating this word as of time, and the rendering "a little while" of the margin, will, therefore, seem preferable. But see next note, and the "altogether" of ver. 12. It has often been most justly remarked what grateful note should be taken of the fact that God always is recorded as turning such a wistful, loving eye to any symptom of repentance (1 Kings xxi. 27—29; Jonah ii. 5—9). Who can estimate the loss of men, that the symptoms have been so frequent, so comparatively easily found as compared with the reality of lastingness?

Ver. 8.—The genius of this verse, nevertheless, will quite admit of the Authorized Version rendering, proposed to be superseded in the last verse. This says life shall be spared, but still severe moral reckoning (that of servitude in a sense and tributariness) shall be taken with the transgressors and forsakers of the Lord! The contrast of God's service and that of men and the world again touchingly recalls the words of Christ (Matt. xi. 28—30).

Ver. 9.—Words do not tell in this verse the "humbled service" of Rehoboam and the princes; but the *position* speaks, speaks volumes of itself. Where did Rehoboam hide himself, where would he not have been glad to hide himself, while the treasures of the house of the Lord, and those of his own house, were coolly taken by the foreign soldiery, none forbidding them, nor resisting, nor even making afraid?

Ver. 10.—Instead of which King Rehoboam made shields of brass. A most humbling reversal of the glowing promise afterwards given, "For brass I will bring gold" (Isa. lx. 17).

Ver. 12.—This verse is not in the parallel, but is particularly proper to Chronicles and its uniform tenor. And also in Judah things went well. The obvious meaning, "and still some good was left in Judah." There was some hopefulness in the situation, and reason for striving mightily "to be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die" (Rev. iii. 2). The occurrence of לְכָלָה is somewhat against the rendering of "some" in ver. 7 as an adverb of *time*.

Ver. 13.—The parallel to the remaining verses of this chapter is found in 1 Kings xiv. 21, 22, 29—31. In Jerusalem. Possibly, considering the words of ch. xi. 5—12, 17, this may indicate that Rehoboam was brought down to thinking almost more of the safety of Jerusalem and himself than of the kingdom in its length and breadth. One and forty years old (see our note, ch. x. 8, towards the end, and compare our ch. xiii. 7, as well as the parallel places, 1 Kings xii. 8 and xiv. 21). It cannot be held as conclusively shown that the age of forty-one is incorrect. An Ammonitess (see 1 Kings xi. 1—9). Rehoboam's mother's name and nationality are noted also, and twice in the parallel (1 Kings xiv. 21, 31). Naamah was possibly the daughter of Nahash (1 Chron. xix. 1—xx. 3). The briefness but decidedness of the notifications made as to this mother of Rehoboam leaves us without doubt that there is not lacking significance in them. Schulz (in his 'Scholia in Vet. Test.,' vol. iii.) says the reason is "quia ea filio idololatriæ ansam dedisse videtur;" Keil and Bertheau think that, though there was evidence of this in the case of the mention of Asa's mother (1 Kings xv. 13), the explanation here is that Naamah "appears" to have had, as queen-mother, considerable influence in the government. They do not specify where they find this to "appear" with any marked plainness. It is quite true that, in the successive accounts of the Jewish kings, the name of each mother is mentioned (1 Kings xv. 2; ch. xiii. 2; 1 Kings xxii. 42; ch. xx. 32, etc.). We should say it is like the book, so Divine and human, called the Bible, to do so far-seeing and far-reaching a thing as to give the mother's name; and practically to say that Solomon and Naamah were (in special sense for Judah) a repetition of Adam and Eve. How far Judah and her line of kings may have correctly said, *they* were answerable for "death and all our woe," the sacred historians say (1 Kings xi. 4, 9—11, 14, 23, 26, 31, 33, 36; xii. 24; ch. xi. 4).

Ver. 14.—These summarizing moral estimates of the character of the succeeding kings are, indeed, common to the compilers of both Chronicles and Kings, though absent, in the case of Rehoboam, from the parallel.

Ver. 15.—The authority quoted by the writer of Kings (xiv. 29, 30) is "the book of the Chronicles [literally, *the book of the acts of the days*, i.q. the title of our 'Chronicles'] of the kings of Judah," on which follows in the next verse the substantive statement, "And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days." The authorities quoted here are the works of Shemaiah and of Iddo, and it is possible that the following words touching the continual wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, which have *not* the substantive verb among them, may have been part of the title of Iddo's work, although it is more probable that his work on 'Genealogies' would retain the character of a specialty. We subjoin for English readers a literal translation of this verse: "And the words (acts) of Jeroboam first and last, are they not written in the words (acts) of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer touching genealogies" [but Gesenius, *sub voce*, "in the manner of a genealogical table"] "and wars of Rehoboam and Jeroboam perpetual." We think that neither our Authorized Version nor Gesenius's rendering probably convey the correct meaning. The hithp. of יָחַשׂ would be better satisfied by the rendering, "to make a register," *i.e.* "to preserve a continued register of David's genealogy."

Ver. 16.—In the city of David. *i.e.* on Mount Zion, an eminence on the northern part of Mount Moriah. Here was the burying-place of the kings, chambers with recesses for the successive kings. To this place of royal sepulture some of the kings were not permitted to be brought (ch. xxi.

20; xxiv. 25; xxviii. 27; 2 Kings xv. 7). The chief cemetery of the city was on the slopes of the valley of the Kidron (1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings xxiii. 6; ch. xxix. 5, 16); another, probably, was south of the city on the sides of the ravine of Hinnom (Jer. vii. 32). In the king's sepulchres eleven out of Judah's twenty-two kings were laid—David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Ahaziah, Amaziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, Josiah. For Asa (ch. xvi. 14) and Hezekiah (ch. xxxii. 33) places of special honour were found. The good priest Jehoiada also had burial in the king's burial-place (ch. xxiv. 16). Kings Jehoram (ch. xxi. 20) and Joash (ch. xxiv. 25) were buried in the "city of David," but not in the above sepulchres. Uzziah, because a leper, was buried in the "field of the burial of the kings" (ch. xxvi. 23). It is all but certain that these royal sepulchres were in the enclosure now called the "Haram area." (For other interesting and important references, see Neh. iii. 16; Ezek. xliii. 7, 9; 2 Kings xxi. 18, 26; ch. xxxiii. 20; xxviii. 27.) While Rehoboam was laid thus to sleep with his fathers, Jeroboam's reign had yet four years to run.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*A model instance of Divine goodness and opportunity prolonged to one who annulled all, and vitiated every highest privilege vouchsafed to him, by the one fact of his own infidelity of heart.* We are strikingly taught, and we vividly recall from the contents of this chapter, the following lessons and facts.

I. How VERY PRONE FORGETFULNESS OF OUR PAST SINS IS TO FOLLOW WITH SWIFT RAPIDITY ON PRESENT RESPITE FROM FEAR, RELIEF FROM SUFFERING, REMISSION OF PUNISHMENT, RESTORATION OF OUR FORMER STATUS, IN WHATSOEVER KIND! Yet retentive *memory* of that sin would constitute our duty, our best wisdom, one of our surest cautions for the future, one of the likeliest fertilizings of penitence, and springs of humble gratitude.

II. How VERY PRONE SECURITY, ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE IN SELF, AND THE SPIRIT OF EITHER DEFIANCE OR RECKLESS DISREGARD TOWARDS WHAT MAY AGAIN INVADE, IN FEAR, IN PAIN, IN PUNISHMENT, IN LOSS OF EVEN THE EARTHLY POSITION WE LOVE SO WELL, ARE TO FOLLOW QUICKLY ON PRESENT RELIEF! Too often, when the deeply useful memory of the sin is put far away out of sight and out of memory, it is but the precursor of the springing up of a very crop of positively harmful growth. The ground that is unoccupied by sweet pasture will be sure to seed itself, of all floating ill weeds; and to bring forth even of its own self, and own emptiness, or own pravity, the baneful, the noxious, the poisonous herb!

III. How KIND THE PUNISHMENTS OF GOD ARE! They are *essentially* so. Their *intent* is to recover, to reform, to improve. With lesson in them, with suggestion in them, with caution and warning in them, with course and system of *discipline*, they offer exactly what it were impossible to get of self, or to get of others, or to get from anywhere except from the touch of the hand or the finger, or the rod of that tenderest to smite, the all-knowing Father of us all! So ver. 8 says deliberately, distinctly, that God would teach Rehoboam and condescendingly wait near him some while, to teach him, the *comparison of services*, the difference by experience of his yoke, burden, and service most ennobling, *and those* of such a one as Shishak King of Egypt. Rehoboam would find a greater difference between the two than that of his own well-known figurative language, the "whip" and the "scorpion." In tenderer connection, equally truly and sweet, did Caroline Fry, once on a time, teach every chastened child of God, and of sorrow, and of smart, and of even woe, to sing—

"Often the clouds of deepest woe
  So sweet a message bear,
Dark though they seem, 'twere hard to find
  One frown of anger there!

"It needs our hearts be weaned from earth,
  It needs that we be driven,
By loss of every earthly stay,
  To find our hope in heaven!"

IV. How READY TO FORGIVE, TO GRANT RESPITE AND FURLOUGH, TO GIVE "ROOM AND SPACE FOR REPENTANCE," THE LORD GOD OF US ALL IS! Fully thirteen years, as it appears, did such manner of long-suffering, of forgivingness, even when it could not be precipitated into objective forgiveness, hold out—sparing, pitying, prolonging probation, repeating trial, accepting the words, the posture, the fastings, the tears, the petitions of humiliation, the partial and transient amendments of life and conduct, in case anything real, deep, lasting, might haply come of them. Fully thirteen years (see vers. 2, 13) was Rehoboam kept on the throne, and all this long-suffering, considerate mercy shown to him, as though for him alone, or for him first, or for him chiefly, it had been written, "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust"—*who all the while was* neutralizing and cancelling Divine goodness, gift, opportunity, by *the one* damning vice that wrote itself as his epitaph, *itself* history's last memorandum of him, the lamentable summary in a sentence, "Because he *fixed* not his heart to seek the Lord!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The peril of security.* The King of Judah, whose career had been marked by such a strange admixture of good and evil, of wisdom and folly (see homily on ch. xi. 18—23), here takes another turn in his varied course, and this time a decisive one; but we mark first—

I. THE GOOD WORK OF CONSOLIDATION. He "had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself." The reference is, principally though not perhaps exclusively, to the action chronicled in the previous chapter (vers. 5—12, 22, 23). When he found that it was not open to him to regain the seceded tribes by force of arms, he set himself, like a wise man, to secure the fraction that was left him. He may have consoled himself with the thought—which is not only a thought but a truth—that a small estate that is well governed and well kept is far better than a large one that is ill managed, and that, consequently, soon shows signs of feebleness and decline. Those three years of consolidation, spent in the service of Jehovah, and under the sanction of his priests and prophets, were years of real worth to the country, and probably of happiness to Rehoboam. In the conduct of our estate, whether that be some business in which we are engaged, or some institution or Church we are serving, or some character (another's or our own) that we are building up, we spend our time and our strength well in the work of "establishing and strengthening." In the supreme matter of human character we can hardly lay too much emphasis on this matter of consolidation. Character must be fortified by knowledge, by the understanding and the cordial acceptance of Christian principles, by exercise, by the nourishment and growth of a strong love for what is pure and true and generous, and by a hearty hatred of all that is corrupt and mean and false.

II. THE TEMPTATION OF SUPPOSED SECURITY. When Rehoboam had attained to a position in which he felt himself secure, then he relaxed his hold on his early convictions, he surrendered his trust in God, he abandoned the faith and practice of his fathers. While conscious of danger from without, he was glad to be able to look for help to the Power that was above, and he remained loyal to Jehovah; as soon as he felt or fancied himself secure within his ramparts, he flung away his spiritual support. Here we have guilt and folly in equal measure—*guilt*, for it was singularly ungrateful of him to forsake the God who had so clearly placed his dynasty on the throne, and impious of him to turn from the worship of him whom he believed to be the one true and living God; *folly*, for he might have known that his material defences would avail him nothing if the anger of the Lord was enkindled and the hand of the Lord directed against him. *Supposed security is a strong temptation.* 1. When we believe ourselves to be possessed of a sufficiency of material treasure, we think we can afford to be independent of the aid of the Divine provision. 2. When we think we have surrounded ourselves with all needful sources of earthly and human joy, we are apt to think we can dispense with the consolations and the satisfactions which are in Jesus Christ; when we have attained to some strength of mind and of will, to some measure of maturity, we are tempted to suppose that there is less necessity, if any at all, to look upward for Divine support, to lean on the Divine arm. To yield to this temptation is to err sadly, to sin grievously. (1) *To err sadly;* for we shall find that no defences or securities that are of earth or that are of man will avail us against all the difficulties and hazards that are around and against us, without the aid of an almighty arm; and the end will be failure and dishonour. (2) *To sin grievously;* for God is demanding of us, in terms we cannot fail to understand and with a frequency we cannot fail to mark, that we should put our trust *in him*, and not in man; in him, and not in ourselves; in him, and not in "the chariots and horses" of this world.

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HIGH POSITION. Rehoboam "forsook the Law of the Lord, *and all Israel with him.*" His people were not unaccountable for following him, but how weighty was his responsibility for leading them astray!—C.

Vers. 2—12.—*Penalty, penitence, and forgiveness.* It was not many months before Rehoboam found out the heinousness of his offence, the magnitude of his mistake; for in the path of sin comes penalty, and behind penalty steals shame. Happily for him there was mercy behind that. We look at this succession—

I. AS EXPERIENCED BY THE KING OF JUDAH. First of all, following fast on his transgression, came: 1. *Divine displeasure and humiliating defeat.* There came in to his palace-gates the stern spokesman for God, the prophet of Jehovah, with the language of cutting censure on his lips, "Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, therefore have I also left you," etc. (ver. 5); and with this anger of the Lord came disgraceful defeat on the field of battle. Those strong places he had so carefully fortified, of which he was so proud, and on which he so much relied, went down one after the other at the approach of the enemy, and left the capital at his mercy (vers. 3, 4). Then came: 2. *Spiritual agitation.* Shame, fear, confession. Rehoboam was ashamed of his great folly; he was afraid for the safety of Jerusalem, and even for his own liberty or life; he made a humble confession of his sin. He and his princes "humbled themselves" before God (ver. 6). And then came: 3. *The Divine clemency.* (1) God took him back into his forgiving favour (ver. 7). "The wrath of the Lord turned from him" (ver. 12). (2) He promised him deliverance in a short time, and he graciously fulfilled his word; for Shishak went back without destroying or sacking the capital, and without taking the life or liberty of the king. (3) His mercy included discipline. God let Rehoboam be subject to the Egyptian king for a while that he might know the difference between a degrading servitude and an ennobling service (see next homily); and he suffered Jerusalem to be stripped of some of its proud treasures, that the king and his princes might learn that their strength and wealth were as nothing in comparison with the favour of God, and would be forfeited by their disobedience and disloyalty. God's mercy was of such a kind as to justify repentance, but to discourage rebellion and wrong-doing.

II. IN OUR OWN EXPERIENCE. Following our sin against the Lord, whether this be some special act of transgression, or whether it be the condition of estrangement and separation from him, is: 1. *The Divine rebuke.* This comes to our heart through the written or uttered Word of God, or through the pricking and piercing of our own conscience, or through the coming of God to the individual soul by his Divine providence. In some form or other God says to us, "Thou hast sinned, and done evil in my sight." 2. *Spiritual agitation and return.* Our heart is *humbled;* we are conscious that we have violated the Law and grieved the Spirit of God, and our soul is filled with a holy and a manly shame. And then our heart *turns toward* God; we "set our hearts to seek the Lord God," our Father and our Saviour and our Friend; we earnestly desire to be taken into his service. And then comes: 3. *Divine forgiveness.* God receives us fully into his favour; he takes us back to his heart and to his home, so that we are no longer aliens or enemies, but children at his hearth and table. Yet he makes us to know that our past sin has left some of its marks behind it. It has robbed us of some treasure; it has injured us, perhaps in our circumstances; certainly in our soul. We cannot break his righteous Law, we cannot oppose his holy and loving will, we cannot violate the laws of our own spiritual nature, without being something the poorer for our folly and our guilt. Nevertheless, the capital is not taken, the enemy withdraws; we have left us our liberty, and our power to serve the righteous and the loving Saviour.—C.

Ver. 8.—*Servitude and service.* "*They shall be servants to him* [for a short time], *that they may discern my service and the service of the kingdoms of the lands;* i.e. that they may see that my rule is not so oppressive as that of foreign kings" (Keil). God would let Rehoboam and the princes of Judah be for a time subject to Shishak—be in his power, be at his mercy, be compelled to go through the miserable humiliation of buying him off—that he might be able to contrast the honourable and happy service which he had known for three years (ch. xi. 17) with the unendurable subjection to which he was now reduced. He should feel and know that the way of transgressors is hard; that between the bonds of the Lord and the yoke of the stranger there was all the difference between blessedness and misery, between a holy service and a degrading servitude.

I. THE DEGRADING SERVITUDE. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants [or, 'slaves'] ye are to whom ye obey?" "Ye were the servants [slaves] of sin;" "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. vi. 16—18). 1. Sin is a foreign power. It is a stranger; it is an interloper; it has stepped in between ourselves and God; it is like the Egyptian forces that came up against Judah and Jerusalem, and sought to bring the people of God into captivity. Sin is our natural enemy, whom we have greatest reason to dread. 2. Sin proves a hard master, and forces to a cruel bondage. It is the ultimate source of *poverty*, and that is a hard master; it leads to *vice*, and that holds its victims in the most degrading thraldom; it throws around its subjects the coils of *procrastination*, and these hold the spirit in an evil circle from which it tries vainly to escape; it takes men further and further away from God, and leads them down to sources of satisfaction that are sure to fail and to end in disappointment and heart-ache; it is a sorry servitude in which to suffer; it is in very striking contrast to—

II. THE HOLY SERVICE OF THE SAVIOUR. To recognize the claims of our Divine Father and Redeemer, to yield ourselves in glad self-surrender to him, to spend our days and powers in his service—what is this? 1. It is the one *right* thing to do. It is to be fulfilling the greatest and strongest of all obligations. 2. It is the path of *true liberty*. Every servant of a Divine Saviour can say and sing—

"In a service which thy love appoints
There are no bonds for me,

. . . .

A life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty."

3. It is the secret and the source of lasting peace and of abiding joy. 4. It is the commencement of that life which is "life indeed," which is the beginning and foretaste of "eternal life"—the life which is of God, for God, with God, in God.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The apostasy of Rehoboam.* I. EARLY IN ITS COMMENCEMENT. After the three years already mentioned (ch. xi. 17). Rehoboam's piety was short-lived, like the morning cloud and early dew (Hos. vi. 4), and like the seed upon stony ground (Matt. xiii. 5). Want of stability and permanence is a chief defect in man's goodness. Many begin well who neither continue long nor end aright.

II. PRESUMPTUOUS IN ITS SPIRIT. Rehoboam's declension began after he had established the kingdom and strengthened himself. His fit of reforming zeal continued no longer than the fear which caused it. When this expired that vanished. So long as the country was defenceless, Rehoboam deemed it prudent to have Jehovah on his side, and with that end in view he patronized Jehovah's altars. The moment his garrisons were erected, manned, and stored, he began to reckon that Jehovah's aid was not so indispensable, and that his reforming zeal need not be so extremely hot. So men still think of God, and assume a semblance of religion when they feel themselves in peril, but the instant peril passes they doff the cloak of piety they have erstwhile worn—like Pharaoh (Exod. viii. 8, 15; ix. 27, 34), like the Israelites (Numb. xxi. 7; xxv. 1; Ps. lxxviii. 31; cvi. 6), like Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 29), and others.

III. THOROUGH-GOING IN ITS CHARACTER. 1. *Negative.* He forsook the Law of the Lord, probably by violating its moral precepts and discontinuing its ceremonial rites, by abandoning the worship and deserting the altars of Jehovah. 2. *Positive.* He returned to the heathen idolatries which for three years he had neglected (1 Kings xi. 7, 8), like a dog to his vomit, etc. (2 Pet. ii. 22). So a merely negative declension in religion is impossible. He who abandons the service of God cannot stop short of serving the devil. No man can serve two masters (Matt. vi. 24); but every man must serve one.

IV. CONTAGIOUS IN ITS INFLUENCE. As Achan perished not alone in his iniquity (Josh. xxii. 20), so Rehoboam sinned not alone in his apostasy, but by means of his royal example or command drew all Israel after him. "One sinner destroyeth much good" (Eccles. ix. 18); "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. v. 6). One asks, where were the priests and Levites who had so bravely resisted the profanations of Jeroboam, and rather sacrificed their suburbs and possessions than defile their consciences (ch. xi. 14)? and where were the pious Israelites who had set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel (ch. xi. 16)? In one short year their fervour had been quenched, their fidelity shaken, their courage damped.

V. DISASTROUS IN ITS CONSEQUENCE. "Evil pursueth sinners" (Prov. xiii. 21), and in two years Nemesis overtook Rehoboam in the shape of an Egyptian invasion. Of all sinners it is true, "their feet shall slide in due time" (Deut. xxxii. 35); of apostates it is written, "I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord" (Ezek. xi. 21).

Learn: 1. The sin of apostasy. 2. The danger of prosperity. 3. The impossibility of neutrality. 4. The fickleness of crowds in religion as in politics. 5. The corrupting influence of evil example. 6. The certainty of retribution.—W.

Vers. 2—4.—*Shishak's invasion.* I. THE INVADER. Shishak King of Egypt, the Sesonchis of Manetho, the Shashanq I. of the monuments (B.C. 966). Originally the son of an Assyrian king named Nimrod, "who had met his death in Egypt and been buried at Abydos," Shashanq I. of the twenty-second dynasty established his seat of royalty at Bubastis, in Lower Egypt (Brugsch, 'Egypt under the Pharaohs,' ii. 215, 216; Ebers, in Riehm's 'Handwörterbuch,' art. "Sisak;" 'Records of the Past,' xii. 93). His mother's name was Tentespeh, his wife's Tahpenes (1 Kings xi. 19). One of his wife's sisters married Hadad the Edomite; another became the wife of Jeroboam (Stanley, 'Jewish Church,' ii. 275; Ewald, 'History of Israel,' iii. 217; iv. 32).

II. THE ARMY. 1. *Chariots.* In ancient times a common instrument of war (Exod. xiv. 9; 2 Sam. xv. 1; 1 Kings xx. 1). Shishak had twelve hundred, or twice the number of Pharaoh's chosen chariots in the time of Moses (Exod. xiv. 7). The Philistines once collected against Israel thirty thousand (1 Sam. xiii. 5). Solomon had fourteen hundred (1 Kings x. 26), Rehoboam likely not so many in consequence of the disruption of the kingdom. 2. *Horsemen.* Sixty thousand; five times as many as had belonged to Solomon (1 Kings iv. 26), and twelve times as many as the Philistines had brought against Israel (1 Sam. xiii. 5). Forty thousand mounted warriors once fell before David's troops (2 Sam. x. 18). 3. *Infantry.* Without number, composed of native forces and mercenaries or foreign troops—Lubims, Sukkims, and Ethiopians. (1) The Lubims, or Libyans (ch. xvi. 8; Dan. xi. 43), the Lehabim of Gen. x. 13, the Temhu, or Tehennu, or more accurately the eastern portion of this people, the Lubu of the monuments (Ebers, 'Egypt and the Books of Moses,' p. 104), were the inhabitants of the districts of Mareotis and Libya west of the Canopic arm of the Nile (Knobel), or in the larger sense the Liby-Ægyptii of the ancients (Keil), the people dwelling between Lower Egypt and the Roman province of Africa (Kautzsch in Riehm, art. "Libyer"). (2) The Sukkim were aborigines of Africa, "cavemen," troglodytes (LXX., Vulgate), "probably the Æthiopian troglodytes upon the mountains on the west coast of the Arabian Gulf" (Bertheau), whom Strabo and Pliny mention, the latter speaking of a troglodyte city *Suche*, which has been identified with Suâkim (Kautzsch). (3) The Ethiopians, or Cushites, introduced among the forces of Shishak (cf. Nah. iii. 9) were drawn from the African territory south of Egypt.

III. THE REASON. 1. *Shishak's.* Perhaps to assist Jeroboam in his measures of hostility against Rehoboam, and eventually to secure the supremacy of Judah, possibly also of Israel as well. 2. *Jehovah's.* To punish Rehoboam and Judah for their apostasy. Though second causes need not be overlooked, they must not be permitted to obscure, far less to deny, the first. Had Rehoboam remained faithful to Jehovah, all the intrigues of Jeroboam would have failed to start Shishak on the expedition here reported.

IV. THE PROGRESS. Shishak captured all the fenced cities of Judah in which Rehoboam trusted (ch. xi. 5—9), and encamped his army before the walls of Jerusalem. Vain, after all, had been Rehoboam's confidence. His garrisons and soldiers had yielded to the first assault. The props on which men lean often prove broken reeds. The shelters to which sinners run in the day of calamity mostly turn out refuges of lies (Isa. xxviii. 17).

LESSONS. 1. The certainty of sin being sooner or later overtaken by retribution (Numb. xxxii. 23). 2. The weakness of all defences, whether for nations or for individuals, when God is not within them (Ps. cxxvii. 1). 3. When God has a sinner to chastise he can easily find an instrument wherewith to do it (Isa. x. 5).—W.

Vers. 5—8.—*Two messages from Jehovah.* I. A MESSAGE OF WARNING. (Vers. 5, 6.) 1. *By whom sent.* Shemaiah the prophet, or man of God (ch. xi. 2). When Jehovah has a message for any age, people, or individual, he can always find a messenger to bear it—a Moses to go to Pharaoh, a Samuel to speak to Saul, a Nathan to send to David, an Elijah or a Micaiah to warn Ahab, a John the Baptist to preach to Israel and testify against Herod. The hour never comes without the man. When a Paul or a Polycarp, an Athanasius or an Augustine, a Calvin or a Luther, a Knox or a Wesley, is needed in the New Testament Church, he appears at the moment when most required. 2. *To whom addressed.* To Rehoboam and the princes of Judah whom Shishak's invasion had caused to convene in Jerusalem. They had come together to consult about the safety of the capital; they had not called Jehovah to the council. They had not realized that in such a crisis as had arisen "vain was the help of man," and "through God alone could they do valiantly" (Ps. lx. 11, 12); that unless God kept the city, they the watchers would watch in vain (Ps. cxxvii. 1). Yet they seem to have discerned that their best efforts would prove ineffectual, and they were filled with fear. Happily Jehovah thought of them, though they forgat him. 3. *In what terms it ran.* (1) It intimated a fact: "Ye have forsaken me." This showed that Jehovah had been cognizant of all that had taken place since Rehoboam got his garrisons erected, had witnessed the idolatries and unspeakable abominations of the faithless king and his coward princes, though perhaps they had reasoned that, as God was in the height of heaven, he could not know what transpired upon the earth (Job xxii. 12—14). But though they had not seen him, he had observed them (Prov. xv. 3; Amos ix. 8). (2) It announced a consequence: "Therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak." Thus did Jehovah signify that it was he himself even more than Shishak that had come up against Rehoboam and his princes; Shishak had not appeared before their gates without his permission; and without his assistance nothing they could do would prevent them falling into Shishak's hand. Jehovah, indeed, could avert that calamity. He could put a hook into Shishak's nose and lead him back by the way he came, as he afterwards did to Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 28; Isa. xxxvii. 29); but in the mean time, as they had left him for the calves of Egypt, he had left them to be the prey of Egypt's lord. 4. *What effect it produced.* (1) Contrition, or at least seeming contrition: "They humbled themselves." To be sure, their penitence, like their previous reformation, was only skin deep. Nevertheless, it had the semblance of reality, and God accepted it as such. (2) Confession: "They said, The Lord is righteous," *i.e.* in punishing them as he had done; in which was implied an acknowledgment that they had sinned. This the design of all God's chastisements, whether national or individual, to excite personal humiliation and hearty recognition of the holiness and justice of God (Deut. viii. 5, 16; Ezek. xx. 37, 43; Hos. v. 15). Only confession may be on the lip where no real contrition is in the heart.

II. A MESSAGE OF MERCY. (Vers. 7, 8.) 1. *Its occasion.* The success of the first message in the (at least seeming) penitence of the king and his princes. "God speaketh once, yea twice" (Job xxxiii. 14), to men, even to his people, who often fail to understand his first voice (1 Sam. iii. 4; Dan. xii. 8; Mark ix. 32; John xi. 13), or understand but refuse to hear (Isa. lxv. 12), though occasionally also they listen and submit (Jonah iii. 5). In the first case, his second speaking may be nothing more than a repetition of the first, or an explanation of its contents; in the second, it commonly assumes the form of increased warnings and severer threatenings; in the third, it is usually a voice of mercy following on a voice of judgment. It was so with

Rehoboam and the princes of Judah. 2. *Its contents.* (1) Their humiliation had been observed and accepted: "They have humbled themselves." So God still sees and regards with favour all who abase themselves before him (Jer. xxxi. 18; Ps. ix. 12; x. 17; 1 Kings xxi. 29). (2) A degree, at least, of clemency would be extended towards them: "I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak." So God delights to meet the first advances of returning penitents with such foretastes of mercy as will lure them on to desire its full fruition. (3) Nevertheless, a measure of correction would be laid upon them. Though Shishak should not be suffered to work his will either upon them or their city, they would, nevertheless, fall into his hand. They should be his servants, either as captives or as tributaries; and would learn the difference between Jehovah's rule and the domination of foreign kings. So God still deals with his people—forgives them, but permits them to reap the temporal fruits of their transgression, that they may know what an evil and bitter thing it is to forsake God (Jer. ii. 19), and how much more easy is Christ's yoke (Matt. xi. 29, 30) than that of sin (Lam. i. 14).

Learn: 1. The omniscience of God: "All things are naked," etc. (Heb. iv. 13). 2. God's compact with the soul: "The Lord is with us," etc. (ch. xv. 2). 3. The mercifulness of God: he is "long-suffering, and slow to wrath" (Exod. xxxiv. 6; Ps. lxxviii. 38). 4. The misery of sin: it ever entails sorrow (Ps. xxxii. 10). 5. God's ability to execute his own sentences: "It is a fearful thing," etc. (Heb. x. 31); "Though hand join in hand," etc. (Prov. xi. 21).—W.

Ver. 9.—*The first sacking of Jerusalem.* I. ITS HISTORIC CERTAINTY. That Shishak gradually drew his lines closer round the capital, and in the end stormed its citadel, has received confirmation from the monuments. 1. In the temple of Karnak, at Thebes, on the walls of which Seti I. and Rameses II. had by means of pictorial representations and hieroglyphic inscriptions preserved a record of their victories, Sheshonq, on returning from Palestine, caused a bas-relief to be executed in commemoration of his expedition. 2. On the south wall, behind the picture of the victories of Rameses II., to the east of the hall of the Bubastids, appears a colossal image of the Egyptian sovereign, arrayed in warlike costume and dealing heavy blows with a club or iron mace upon his captives, who are Jews or, at least, Asiatics, whom he grasps by the hair of their heads. 3. In another representation he is depicted as leading captive a hundred and thirty-three cities or tribes, each one of which is personated by the figure of a chief whose name is written on an embattled shield, and whose physiognomy has been supposed (Lenormant) to declare them Jews, though this is probably imagination. 4. In the lists of names occur those of (1) cities of Judah proper, as *e.g.* Adoraim (*Adurma*), Aijalon (*Ajulon*), Shoco (*Shauke*), Gibeon (*Qebeanu*), etc; (2) Levitical cities of Israel, as *e.g.* Taanach (*Ta'ankau*), Rehob (*Rehabau*), Mahanaim (*Mahanema*), etc.; and (3) Canaanitish cities, as *e.g.* Bethshan (*Beithshanlan*), Megiddo (*Makethu*). 5. Among the names is one styled Judah-Malek; not "the King of Judah" (Stanley), but "the kingly Judah" (Ebers), or "Judah a kingdom" (Rawlinson), which is supposed to point to Jerusalem. 6. The conquered nations are designated as the "'Am of a distant land," and the Fenekh or the Phœnicians. The former expression, "'Am," answers exactly to the Hebrew word for "people," and may have been intended to denote the Jews (Brugsch, 'Egypt under the Pharaohs,' ii. 215—219; Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' 334—339; Ebers, in Riehm, art. "Sisak").

II. ITS ACTUAL EXTENT. Whether Shishak ravaged the city is doubtful. The plundering reported suggests that he did (Bertheau, Keil), but, "like Hezekiah on the occasion of Sennacherib's invasion (2 Kings xviii. 13—16), Rehoboam may have surrendered his treasures (1 Kings xiv. 26) "to save his city from the horrors of capture" (Rawlinson). In any case, Shishak carried off valuable spoil. 1. *The treasures of the temple*, or house of the Lord, the sacred utensils employed in worship, which were then material, and the loss of which greatly hindered the observance of religion—a calamity which cannot now befall the Church of God in gospel times, since in Christian worship the outward ritual is nothing, but the inward spirit everything. 2. *The treasures of the palace*, or king's house in the city of David, *i.e.* the regalia or crown jewels, which are always more or less an object of desire to victorious generals and armies—a smaller calamity than the former, as the destruction of a nation's wealth is a lesser evil than the extinction or suppression of its religion. 3. *The golden shields* in the house of the forest of Lebanon (ch. ix. 16), *which Solomon had made*, the LXX. (1 Kings xiv. 26) adding that he likewise carried off the golden armour David had taken as spoil from the King of Zobah (1 Chron. xviii. 7)—the least calamity of the three, the shields being luxuries of which king or nation might be deprived without hurt, and the armour spoil of which either might be deprived without wrong.

III. ITS SPEEDY REPARATION. 1. *The nation's loss concealed.* Rehoboam covered up as far as he could the damage wrought, especially in his palace, by constructing shields of brass to take the place of those of gold which had been abstracted (see next homily). 2. *The king's vanity soothed.* He also endeavoured to heal his own wounded vanity, by causing these brazen shields to be borne before him in state procession every time he entered the temple. Just as they had done before with the golden shields, the guards fetched out their spurious substitutes with solemn pomp on every ceremonial day, and when the show was concluded replaced them in the guard-chamber, the spectators probably not being aware of the imposition.

LESSONS. 1. The instability of earthly things. A greater king than Shishak will one day plunder kings and common men alike of their material possessions. 2. The facility with which men impose upon themselves, the efforts they make, and the stratagems they resort to, to prop up their fallen greatness or restore their faded glory. Solomon's weak and vain son not the only man who has made brass shields do duty for golden ones. 3. The historic credibility of Scripture. The Shishak invasion is not the only instance in which the monuments have surprisingly corroborated Bible history.—W.

Ver. 10.—*Brazen shields for golden.* I. A VIRTUE. To content one's self with shields of brass when shields of gold cannot be got. "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. xiii. 5).

II. A HYPOCRISY. To pretend that brazen shields are golden, either: 1. *To hide the truth,* that our shields of gold have been stolen, lost, or never had an existence: "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees," etc. (Luke xii. 1, 2); or: 2. *To keep up appearances,* and so gratify our vanity by seeming richer or more socially exalted than we are: "Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes," etc. (Luke xx. 46).

III. A SERMON. 1. *To such as serve God with brass when they should do so with gold*—an exhortation to liberality. 2. *To those who serve God with the appearance of gold when the inward reality is awanting*—a discourse upon sincerity. 3. *To them who would serve God with gold but have only brass*—a promise of better days when Jehovah's word shall be fulfilled, "For brass I will bring gold" (Isa. lx. 17).—W.

Ver. 12.—*Good things in Judah.* I. A PENITENT MONARCH. II. A MERCIFUL GOD. III. A RESTRAINED ENEMY. IV. A PROSPEROUS PEOPLE.—W.

Vers. 13—16.—*The biography of Rehoboam.* I. HIS ANCESTRY. 1. *The son of Solomon,* the son of David. 2. *The son of Naamah* the Ammonitess, the daughter of Hanun the son of Nahash (ch. x. 1).

II. HIS KINGDOM. 1. Its *extent.* Judah, with a portion of Benjamin. 2. Its *capital.* Jerusalem, the city of the great King.

III. HIS REIGN. 1. The *beginning* of it. When he was forty years of age. 2. The *length* of it. Seventeen years; short in comparison with that of Solomon. 3. The *character* of it. (1) Vigorous: "he strengthened himself" (ver. 13). (2) Idolatrous: "he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord" (ver. 14). (3) Troubled: "there were wars continually between him and Jeroboam" (ver. 15). 4. The *end* of it. Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

IV. HIS ACTS. 1. *All written.* From first to last (ver. 15). What a calamity to any man it would be to have all his deeds recorded on the page of history! Yet first and last every action of every man is being engrossed upon the page of God's book of remembrance. 2. *Where written?* In the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and in that of Iddo concerning genealogies. A small honour compared to being written in the book of life. Not so serious a matter to have one's deeds inscribed upon a perishing page by a human biographer as to have them graven "as with a pen of iron in the rock for ever," by the hand of God's recording angel upon the tablets of eternity.

V. HIS SUCCESSOR. 1. His *name*. Abijah, or Abijam (ch. xiii. 1). 2. His *reign*. In Rehoboam's stead. An honour to Rehoboam that he had a son like Abijah; a mercy to Judah that Abijah was better than his father.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

The career of *Abijah* begins and ends with this chapter, the twenty-one verses of which are paralleled by only eight in 1 Kings xv. 1—8. The difference is caused by the fact that the writer of Kings only mentions that there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam, while the writer of Chronicles, besides giving particulars of the war, rehearses the splendid, dramatic, rhetorical address and appeal of Abijah on Mount Zemaraim to the people of the ten tribes.

Ver. 1.—**In the eighteenth year.** Reading this literally, it will appear that Rehoboam had completed a full seventeen years.

Ver. 2.—**Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.** As before noted (ch. xi. 20), and as in the parallel (1 Kings xv. 2), this name is one with "Maachah, daughter of Absalom" (parallel, *Abishalom*). The different alphabetic characters may be attributed to error, and that error the error of transcription merely. As in our note (ch. xi. 20), the word "daughter," as in many similar cases, stands for granddaughter. Thus the father of Maachah was Uriel of Gibeah, and her mother Tamar, daughter of Absalom. Josephus ('Ant.,' viii. 10. § 1) proffers us this connecting link of explanation. On the other hand, Rabbi Joseph's Targum on Chronicles says that Uriel means Absalom, but was a name used to avoid the use of Absalom. We have no clue as to which out of many Gibeahs is here intended. The Hebrew word (גִּבְעָה) signifies a hill with round top, and hence would easily give name to many places. The following are the chief places of the name (as classified by Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 689—691): 1. Gibeah in the mountain district of Judah (Josh. xv. 57; 1 Chron. ii. 49). 2 Gibeath among the towns of Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 28). 3. The Gibeah (1 Sam. vii. 1; 2 Sam. vi. 3, 4). 4. Gibeah of Benjamin (Judg. xix., xx.), between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. This should strictly be quoted either as "Gibeah belonging to Benjamin," or "Geba (גֶּבַע) of Benjamin" (see also 1 Sam. xiii., xiv.; 2 Sam. xxiii. 29; 1 Chron. xi. 31; Hos. v. 8; ix. 9; x. 9). 5. Gibeah of Saul (1 Sam. x. 26; xv. 34; 2 Sam. xxi. 6). Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' v. 2. § 1) states what helps to the identifying of the place as the modern *Tuleil-el-ful*, about thirty stadia from Jerusalem (see also Isa. x. 28—32). The Gibeah of 1 Sam. xxii. 6; xxiii. 19; xxvi. 1, is this Gibeah of Saul. 6. Gibeah in the field (Judg. xx. 31). Lastly, our Authorized Version gives us seven other Gibeahs, only translating this word, *e.g.* "The *hill* of the foreskins" (Josh. v. 3); "The *hill* of Phinehas" (Josh. xxiv. 33); "The *hill* of Moreh" (Judg. vii. 1); "The *hill* of God" (1 Sam. x. 5); "The *hill* of Hachilah" (1 Sam. xxiii. 19; xxvi. 1); "The *hill* of Ammah" (2 Sam. ii. 24); "The *hill* Gareb" (Jer. xxxi. 39).

Ver. 3.—It is not within the province of an expositor to assert dogmatically that numbers like these in this verse should be deprived of one cipher, and that the slaughter of ver. 17 must be, consequently, similarly discounted. It would be, however, a great relief to faith to be able to *give proof* that this treatment would be true to fact. At present the numbers can be shown to be consistent with other numbers, such as those of the entire man-population (1 Chron. xxi. 5; ch. xi. 13—17); and this seems the best that can be said in support of them. It does not, however, suffice to bring comfortable conviction. It is remarkable, among the difficulties that the question entails, that we do not get any satisfactory explanation as to how such vast numbers of slain bodies were disposed of in a compass of ground comparatively so small.

Ver. 4.—**Mount Zemaraim.** This *mount* is not mentioned elsewhere. Presumably it was a mountain or hill above the place called Zemaraim, mentioned in Josh. xviii. 22 as in Benjamin's allotment, and mentioned between the places called Beth ha-Arabah (*i.e.* the Jordan valley) and Bethel. Accordingly, it may be that *itself* lay between these two, or near enough to them one or both. This will quite suit our connection as placing the hill near the borders of Benjamin and Ephraim. It is said to be in Mount Ephraim, *i.e.* in the range of Mount Ephraim, which was one of considerable length, running through the midst of what was afterwards called Samaria, from the Plain of Esdraelon to Judah. Zemaraim may be so named from the Zemarite tribe, who were Hamites, and related to the

Hittites and Amorites (Gen. x. 18; 1 Chron. i. 16), descendants of Canaan; there are some faint traces of their having wandered from their northern settlements into mid and south Palestine. The Septuagint render *Zemaraim* by the same Greek as *Samaria*, *Σομόρων*.

Vers. 5—12.—The idea of Abijah in this religious harangue, addressed or supposed to be addressed to the kingdom of the ten tribes, was good, and the execution was spirited. While, however, he preaches well to others, there are not wanting signs that he can blind himself as to some failure of practice on his own part. The points of the argument running through his harangue are correct, skilfully chosen, and well and religiously thrust home on the heart of his supposed audience. The practical trust of himself and his army are testified to in vers. 14, 15, and abundantly rewarded. This sequel-practical trust is the best credential of the sincerity of his foregoing appeal and harangue.

Ver. 5.—Gave the kingdom . . . to David for ever. With the thrice-repeated "for ever" of what we call 2 Sam. vii. 13—16, and the very emphatic language of the fifteenth verse in that passage, in the memory of Abijah, no one can say he was not justified by the letter and to the letter in what he now says. At the same time, how is it that Abijah does not in all fairness quote the matter of ch. vi. 16 *last* clause, and of its parallel, 1 Kings viii. 25 *last* clause, and of Ps. lxxxix. 28—37; cxxxii. 12? **Covenant of salt** (see Lev. ii. 13; Numb. xviii. 19; Ezek. xliii. 24; Mark ix. 49). The use of salt was ordered first for the meal offerings, which, consisting mainly of flour, did not need it as an antiseptic; afterwards it was ordered for "all" offerings, including the "burnt offering:" as surely as leaven was proscribed, salt was prescribed (Lev. ii. 11). "The covenant of salt" meant the imperishableness and irrevocableness of the engagement made between the two parties to the covenant. The widespread and deeply significant use of it among other and heathen nations is remarkable indeed, and is attested by Pliny ('Hist. Nat.,' xxxi. 41) in forcible words: "Nulla (sacra) conficiuntur sine mola salsa" (Hor., 2 Sat. iii. 200; Virgil, 'Æn.,' ii. 133; Hom., 'Iliad,' i. 449). Some think it a sufficient explanation of the text, "covenant of salt," that, especially in the East, solemn engagements and vows were often recognized and strengthened by hospitalities, as shown to guests, and of these salt was an indispensable element. It is true that some of the ancient indications and descriptions of friendship and close friendships turned on phrases (similar ones, indeed, still existing) into which the word "salt" entered, but that these phrases arose from the fact that salt was so general a constituent of human food seems insufficient explanation, where we can find one of a more direct and more directly religious, or, as the case might be (*e.g.* with heathen sacrifices), superstitious birth. Religion and superstition between them have been the most world-wide, incalculable, and untraceable originators and disseminators of half the possible phrases of human language!

Ver. 6.—The servant of Solomon. 1 Kings xi. 28 is evidently the apter reference for this verse, rather than 26, as generally given.

Ver. 7.—Are gathered . . . have strengthened themselves. The aorist tense is needed for the rendering in both these cases; *e.g.* "And vain men gathered to him, and strengthened themselves against him." **Vain men**; Hebrew, רֵקִים. This word, and one very slightly different in form, and their adverb, occur in all forty-one times; rendered in the Authorized Version "empty" nineteen times, "vain" eighteen times, and "without cause," "to no purpose," and "void" the remaining four times. It is the word that is used of the "empty" pit of Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 24); of the "empty ears" of corn (Gen. xli. 27); of "empty" pitchers and other vessels (Judg. vii. 16; 2 Kings iv. 3; Jer. xiv. 3; li. 34; Ezek. xxiv. 11). And in all the other cases expresses metaphorically the emptiness of head, of heart, or of reason, with the same simple force of language appropriate, it appears, then as now. **Children of Belial**; Hebrew, בְּלִיַּעַל. This word is found twenty-seven times, and, including seven marginal options, is rendered in the Authorized Version "Belial" twenty-three times; the four exceptions being "wicked" three times, and "naughty" once. The derivation of it marks the one expressive meaning of "without profit." **Young and tender-hearted.** Hard as it is to put these objections to the credit of a man forty-one years of age (see our note, ch. x. 8; xii. 13) at all, yet, if so, they can only be explained as some do explain them, of a blamable ignorance, inexperience, and instability.

Vers. 8, 9.—The five succeeding thrusts of these two verses, prefaced by the somewhat self-conscious but, nevertheless, validly pleaded orthodoxy of his own position, are well delivered by Abijah. Jeroboam is scathed (1) for his confidence in a great multitude; (2) for his golden calves for gods; (3) for what amounted necessarily to the excommunication and repudiation of the priests of the Lord, time- and nation-honoured; (4) for the mere manufacture of a new-fangled priesthood, and that after the model of nations foreign and heathen; (5) for the fact that, when these were made, they that made them, and the gods for whom they were made, were all three "like to" one another—no true people, no true priests, and no gods at all! **A young bullock and seven rams.** The consecration sacrifice for the whole line of priests was "one young bullock and two rams without blemish" (Exod. xxix. 1, 15, 19; Lev. viii. 2). Of course, Jeroboam felt his own position in the matter so weak, that each false, illegitimate candidate for the priestly service must bring his sacrifice, and that a larger one by five rams than the divinely ordered one of Moses.

Vers. 10, 11.—The professions summarized in these two verses were confessedly formally true of the king and priests and nation, although Abijah and kingdom certainly did not carry a clean conscience in them (Matt. xv. 8; Mark xii. 33; 1 Sam. xv. 22; Isa. i. 11, 16, 19). They were, moreover, beyond a doubt really true of multitudes of *individuals* in the kingdom of Judah and Benjamin. And these were "the salt of the" kingdom (Matt. v. 13). **They burnt . . . sweet incense** (so our ch. ii. 4; Exod. xxx. 7; Rev. viii. 3, 4). **The pure table . . . the candlestick.** Although ten of each of these were made, only one was used, or only one at the time (see our note on ch. iv. 8, compared with ch. xxix. 18; 1 Kings vii. 48). **We have not forsaken him . . . ye have forsaken him.** If all the difference that these words have it in them to express could have been put to the credit of Abijah, what tremendous strength would have now belonged to his position and to his heart!

Ver. 12.—The concluding utterances of Abijah certainly did not fall below what had preceded or the occasion in itself; and the echoes of them, while they died on the ear, must have lived, indeed, and stirred life in the hearts of many (Josh. v. 14; Numb. x. 9; xxxi. 6; our ver. 14, and ch. v. 12, 13).

Vers. 13—16.—These verses purport to tell how Jeroboam, with all his vastly preponderating numbers (ver. 3), left nothing undone to secure the victory, and resorted even to the ambushment described; how, on the other hand, Abijah and his people honoured God by their cry and confident shout, and were delivered because they trusted in him (1 Sam. xvii. 45—47), and as follows, ver. 18, "relied upon the Lord God of their fathers."

Ver. 17.—**Slain**; Hebrew, חֲלָלִים. Even if we accept for a moment the immense numbers written here and elsewhere as authentic, a considerable deduction may be made from our difficulty by virtue of the fact that this word need not mean to describe the actually *slain*. It occurs about ninety-one times. Of these, in our Authorized Version, it is found rendered, including marginal options, as many as fifteen times "wounded," or by even a less severe meaning. However, whether "slain" or "wounded and slain," the alleged numbers of our present text are, in our opinion, incredibly enormous.

Ver. 19.—**Bethel.** Abijah was, perhaps, the rather permitted to take this city as the head-quarters of Jeroboam's irreligious worship. **Jeshanah.** A place not known elsewhere in Scripture by this name, which by derivation means "old." Grove (Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. p. 1035) quotes Josephus ('Ant.,' xiv. 15. § 12) as speaking of a place so named, the scene of a battle between Herod and Antigonus's general, Pappus, but Josephus does not assign its site. **Ephrain**; or, according to Chethiv, *Epron*. Grove (Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. p. 569) says that conjecture has identified it with the *Ephraim* of 2 Sam. xiii. 23, with the *Ophrah* of Josh. xviii. 23, and with the Ephraim of John xi. 54; possibly the modern *El-Taiyibeh* (Dr. Robinson, i. 44), about five miles from Bethel.

Ver. 20.—**The Lord struck him, and he died.** The writer of Chronicles here, for brevity's sake, and not to recur to his name again, records the death of Jeroboam, which, however, did not happen till after Abijah's death, in the second year of Asa's reign (1 Kings xiv. 20; xv. 25). That the *Lord struck* him, may glance at the fearful announcement conveyed to him through his wife by Ahijah (1 Kings xiv. 6—16).

Ver. 21.—**Waxed mighty.** For this our Authorized Version reads, "waxed fat and wanton" (Hebrew, וַיִּתְחַזֵּק), and grew too like his father Rehoboam and his grandfather Solomon, forgetting the "Law" (Deut. xvii. 17).

Ver. 22.—**The story of the Prophet Iddo.** If this be the same work as that mentioned in ch. xii. 15 (see our note there), it is, at any rate, not called by the same title, but by the name well known for *memoirs, of Midrash.*

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—22.—*A royal and manly manifesto in the rights of godly truth.* The narrative of Abijah's short reign of three years is distinguished by one clear account, at any rate, of the wars that had arisen and were prevailing between the two parts of the recently rended and bleeding kingdom, of which a very brief statement only had been made, at the close of the history of Rehoboam's reign, whether here or in the parallel. It is also, and most chiefly, distinguished by the graphic description of the very forcible manifesto, so dramatically delivered as well, in the name and right of religion, and of the truth handed down to him by his fathers, by Abijah King of Judah, before, as it were, all the dissenting and separate congregation of Israel and their king. This subject awaits below some further analysis. And once more, so far as our Book of Chronicles goes, the narrative of this short reign and public career of Abijah is remarkable, in that we should have supposed certainly, when we shut our book, that they were, as nearly as might be, immaculate every way to the honour of God, and by his grace to the credit of the man and the king, with his heroic challenge to all Israel's conscience, towering in the midst of all the rest. The parallel, meanwhile, in Kings undeceives us unwelcomely in this impression, and mournfully disabuses our mind, where with startling precision it is recorded that "Abijah walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father." Whether the unrelated sins of his private life, or the chances of war, or the directer judgment of God, brought his career to so early a close, we are not told. Meanwhile the contents of this chapter are most interesting. They read like an episode almost unique among even the many and varied, the concise and telling monographs that abound in the pages before us. War is waged, armies are ready, and are already face to face; battle itself is ready to begin, or has already begun, when—no spectral figure—King Abijah himself stands on Mount Zemaraim; the King of Israel, and the army of Israel, and, as it were, all the rended-off nation of Israel, fortunately and conveniently congregated before him. If ever man "preached," Abijah preached, and for the day and the occasion lifted up his voice worthily, and was "not afraid." Truth and facts are unmistakably on his side. We seem, for a moment, to be under the spell of an Old Testament Demosthenes, and to be listening to the snatch of an earlier philippic. If we seek some analysis of this mingled argument, denunciation, appeal, we notice—

I. The safe ground of the case made against Israel and Jeroboam. "The Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever—to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt." Perhaps, indeed, Abijah remembered well the solemn proviso of that covenant, emphatically made, and put into psalm as well, "*If* thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore" (Ps. cxxxii. 12). Though he neglected to quote it into his argument, and let us say probably *by design*, yet it was substantially true that the perpetual kingdom *was* made over so, by divinest engagement, to Judah, as against all other comers whomsoever, and up to the coming of the Lord Jesus himself, of whose kingdom there should be indeed no end. For Abijah might, if challenged, have gone on also to quote (Ps. lxxxix. 33—37), "Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." *So* Abijah begins successfully, putting Israel and Jeroboam essentially in the wrong.

II. The moral element flung so effectively and opportunely by Abijah into the argument. "Ought ye not to know this, that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever?" Israel and Jeroboam *did* know it, knew it well; and Abijah and all Judah knew that their separated brethren knew it, and knew it well. It was a well-conceived addition to the argument of the king of the true line. How many persons know the right most assuredly, to whom, for neglecting to do it, the most telling and most stinging expostulation and rebuke might well be couched in the same form of question, "*Ought* ye not to know?"

III. The patent aggravations of the conduct of Jeroboam. Viz. that: 1. It was a case of a subject rebelling against his own king (ver. 6), not of one foreign to the kingdom obtaining sway by conquest over a portion of it. 2. It was a case of that subject also taking advantage of the youth and inexperience of the rightful monarch Rehoboam, who was actually in possession of the throne at the time of the schism.

3. It was a case of the usurper relying on a "multitude" (ver. 8)—a *mere* majority! Nothing of a moral kind can *safely* be decided, on the strength *merely* of a majority, in this world; or, at any rate, up to the present time, in this world. And often the decision of something of a *physical* kind, on the strength of a majority, is most uncertain—the very ground beneath the feet of that majority being so liable to be undermined on a large scale (as is so notable in the sequel of this very history, ver. 18), or otherwise honeycombed by invisible moral forces. God's selection of Israel, his whole conduct of them, of their education, of their government and their legislation, was and is one protest against reliance on the many. **4.** It was a most iniquitous and crying case of idolatry in the setting up of the golden calves. This most glaring instance of the basest sort of supposed expedience did not bear that a word be said on its behalf or in its defence. Had there been not another weak point in the conduct or tactics of Jeroboam and Israel, this carried the sentence of death in itself. **5.** Although it were a corollary most readily to be understood, that the priests and Levites of the true religion's ministry should find themselves no longer in place or at home in such an Israel, yet Abijah notes this also, probably that *first* prominence may be given (as great *historic* interest has certainly been given) to the fact that of the same priests and Levites were found none to sympathize with Jeroboam's evil doings, to countenance them, or to consent, under any pretext of policy, to uphold them; and *secondly*, that the flagitious, sacrilegious, and absolutely reckless defiance of the true religion, of which Jeroboam was guilty, in the sham consecration of sham priests, in imitation of heathen nations and in observance of heathen precedents, might be openly made to confront him, and publicly be hurled as the last aggravating charge against him. Jeroboam "cast out the priests of the Lord . . . and the Levites . . . and made priests after the manner of the nations of other lands."

IV. THE PRONOUNCED DECLARATION, UNBOASTFUL BECAUSE TRUE, AND READILY ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE ONLY THEIR DUTY AND PRIVILEGE UNITED, WHICH ABIJAH MAKES ON BEHALF OF HIMSELF AND KINGDOM. **1.** They scorned golden calves, and had not forsaken the one Lord their God. **2.** Their priests and Levites are the divinely appointed and consecrated ministers of the sanctuary and altar. They do their work. The altar smokes morning and evening, and the odour of the sweet incense ascends. The showbread is in its place and duly renewed. The golden candlestick burns every evening. They have received the charge of the Lord God, and they keep it faithfully, obediently in each respect, and to each time punctually. **3.** God is practically looked to as their Captain, and his ministers are looked to to sound the alarm alike to themselves and for them "against" their foes.

V. THE SHORT PARTING APPEAL. The whole argument, remonstrance, rebuke, has been in an eminent degree addressed to the conscience, and to the distinct and undoubted knowledge of revealed religion, which had been equally the portion of Israel with Judah. And now the parting brief appeal is fully charged with the same spirit. It is an appeal to conscience and religious knowledge and feeling, and legitimately concludes with that *warning* which has so long been, which is still, *the* divinely foreshadowed sanction of command or of prohibition. It depends on the faculty of faith, it is part of the discipline of faith, and—to be mindfully remembered by all—it is some of the most critical and tremblingly anxious exercises of faith. He who believes in nothing but the present does *not* believe in warning, and he who does not believe in warning is, in one word, the infatuated, and ever liable to be the reckless. In this brief pregnant appeal we seem to notice (1) that Abijah turns away his address from Jeroboam altogether, anxious if haply he may just move the people; (2) that there is breathed in it a tender, affectionate, fatherly suasiveness, as with last words of hope, or last words of despair, or as with last dying words; and (3) that there is the deep earnestness of the true man, who yearns that men shall know the day of their merciful visitation, and not speed on in that "way of transgressors," which is "hard," and which "shall not prosper."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—20.—*The folly of unnatural severance, etc.* The whole chapter presents to us a number of lessons, not very closely connected with one another.

I. THE FOLLY OF AN UNNATURAL SEVERANCE. The first thing we read about the reign of Abijah is that there "was war between him and Jeroboam" (ver. 2). What else was to be expected? How, in those times, or indeed in any time, could it be otherwise? Tribes descended, as they were, from a common ancestor, speaking the same language, holding the same faith, having the same history, under a sacred obligation to worship at the same sanctuary, with no natural boundary between them, were bound to be united together and form one strong nation, or else to be at perpetual variance. There are two great mistakes, of which one is as foolish and as mischievous as the other—to insist upon organic union when everything in constitution and providential ordering points to separation; and, on the other hand, to attempt separation when everything clearly points to union. Whom God hath joined together let no man try to put asunder; if he does, he will certainly reap mischief and misery for his harvest. This will apply not only to nations, but to Churches, to social communities, to families, to individuals.

II. THE DUTY AND WISDOM OF REMONSTRANCE. It was right enough of Abijah to utter the strong and effective remonstrance here recorded (vers. 4—12). Perhaps, as one descended by both parents from David, he had a very strong sense of the disloyalty of the two tribes; but he certainly made a very vigorous appeal to them, urging them, by considerations of duty to God and of regard for their own interests, to rally to his side. He did not succeed in the attempt; probably he did not expect to do so. When men have carried disloyal or disobedient thought so far as to be guilty of actual rebellion or active opposition, they are not often moved even by the most cogent and persuasive words. Nevertheless, it is always right to try to move them before resorting to violent measures. We *may* succeed, as men have succeeded before now, in saving sanguinary strife, or in averting that which is, "in all but the bloodshed, a duel." Remonstrance should be made (1) in time; (2) without provocation in tone; (3) in the sorrow which carries dignity, and not in the passion which only excites contempt; (4) with a feeling that our common brotherhood is a greater thing than our individual interests.

III. THE PLACE FOR STRATAGEM IN THE BATTLE OF THE LORD. Jeroboam seems to have been in the way of succeeding by his stratagem (vers. 13, 14), and had there been no strong and special reason for Divine interposition, he would undoubtedly have prevailed against Abijah. Persuasiveness of speech is good, but sagacity in action is better still in any serious campaign. And while simple straightforwardness is the weapon we should commonly use, there is a guile we may employ when our spirit is wholly unselfish, and when we do not invade inviolable truth (see 2 Cor. xii. 16).

IV. THE SUCCESS OF FAITHFULNESS. After all, it was not the cleverness of the crafty Jeroboam, but the faithfulness, thus far, of the obedient Abijah which secured the victory. The men of Judah "cried unto the Lord," and "God smote Jeroboam and all Israel." As we read the chronicles of the two kingdoms, we are amazed that kings and people failed to see that just as they were obedient to Jehovah they prospered, and just as they were disobedient they were overtaken with national calamity. But it is so much easier to distinguish other people's duty than to perceive our own, to see where others missed their way than to find or to keep our own. Continually are we tempted to abandon the path of simple Divine wisdom for that which has its own fascinations, but to which no finger-post of duty points us; and invariably we find that "the end thereof" is sorrow and disillusion. Often the path of righteousness is unattractive and unpromising at the outset; but in that way lies success. Further on the prospect brightens; and at the end of that road is victory and joy. Be faithful unto death, and you may make quite sure of the crown of life.—C.

Ver. 12.—*Four reasons for surrender.* 1. Jesus Christ has taught us that in the great spiritual campaign in which we are engaged there can be no neutrality; he that is not with the Lord is against him (Matt. xii. 30). We have, therefore, to include among those who are in arms against Christ, not only (1) those who deny him by speaking evil of him and disparaging him; and (2) those who refuse to recognize the great claims he makes on the homage and obedience of mankind, reducing him to the rank of a fallible human teacher; but (3) those also who are wholly heedless of his claims, who show an utter disregard to his will, who stand outside his Church, or who do those things which he has expressly denounced and forbidden. These are his enemies, and their name is legion; their resources are great; they compose an army overwhelmingly strong in numbers and material equipments. 2. Before these there come the prophets of the Lord, summoning them to leave the ranks in which they stand, and to surrender themselves to him and his service. These speakers for God entreat them to lay down their arms and to serve under Christ. Their reasons are, at least, fourfold. To be where they are is—

I. To BE OVERTHROWING THAT WHICH THEIR FATHERS BUILT UP. "Fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers." Long and patiently, with many tears and prayers, often in the face of the most determined opposition, in health and sickness, in youth and in strength and in decline, on to old age and even unto death, our fathers fought for the truth they loved; they built up the Church, the institution, the Christian stronghold in which we found ourselves when we awoke to life and thought. And now are we going to take that sacred building down; stone by stone, are our hands—their children's hands—going to demolish it? Are we content to lower the flag they held high so bravely and so nobly? Shall it be our function to undo the large and long result of all their toil? Shall we bring into disrepute the name they honoured far above their own? Shall we fight against the Lord God of our fathers?

II. To BE OPPOSING THAT WHICH THE BEST MEN ARE SUSTAINING. "God's priests . . . cry alarm against you." Invested in the sacred garments, with the appointed signals in their hands (Numb. x. 8), the holiest in the land are urging the people to maintain their ground. The cause of Christian truth has not only the presence of a noble host of good and holy men; it is led by the best of the good and wise. Those who are clothed with righteousness, whose voice is the sound of earnest and irresistible conviction, are summoning all who love God and man to oppose themselves to the enemies of Christ. If we league ourselves "with these his enemies" we must make up our mind to contend with the worthiest and the wisest, with the most pure and brave and devoted, that ever drew mortal breath, that ever sounded the note of battle.

III. To BE FIGHTING AGAINST GOD. "God himself is with us for our Captain." In the Christian Church it is the assured conviction that the invisible Lord is not the absent One; he is the very present One. "Lo, I am with you alway," etc. (Matt. xxviii. 20). We who fight *for* him fight *under* him—under his eye, his observant eye; under his direction—the direction of a hand that is not seen, but that is felt. They who fight against his cause are fighting against him himself. They have to overcome the Almighty.

IV. To BE ARRAYED AGAINST A FORCE THAT MUST PROVE VICTORIOUS. "Ye shall not prosper." Many times has Christianity seemed to be doomed to defeat and even to extinction, but out of every terrible contest it has emerged successful, even triumphant. Persecution, ridicule, argumentation, corruption,—these have done their worst, and they have failed. To-day the friends of Christ are more numerous, and the cause of Christ is more advanced, than ever. And he who is in arms against the Lord of all love and power, who is seeking to undermine his influence, who is contemptuous of his holy will, who is opposing his own indifference or his worldliness to the commands and the invitations of a Divine Saviour, he is in the ranks of the army that will be defeated; no voice of victory will greet his dying ear, no hope of commendation and award will then fill his heart.—C.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Jeroboam: career, character, reputation.* There are three things which belong to every man, with the shaping of which he himself has much, though not everything, to do, and which are of the first importance to him. We look at them in connection with Jeroboam.

I. HIS CAREER. At first, and for some time, we find him steadily rising; beginning low, he distinguishes himself by the character of his work, is promoted to a post of some importance (1 Kings xi. 28); he gains the confidence and good will of the people, is regarded as one who may aspire to the highest position in the state; he has to retire for a time from the presence of Solomon, who suspects his loyalty, but upon the death of that sovereign he returns, takes advantage of the inexperience and foolhardiness of Rehoboam, and mounts the throne, reigning over ten-twelfths of the whole land. Then he maintains his position for some nineteen years, keeping up a chronic war with his royal rival at Jerusalem, and apparently holding his own. Then he has a pitched battle with Abijah, and, spite of clever generalship (vers. 13, 14), he is signally defeated; his troops are utterly routed, and he has to sacrifice three important places. From that time he declines in strength and spirit, until, cowed if not crushed by his defeat, he dies of disappointment and chagrin. "The Lord struck him."

II. HIS CHARACTER. He was evidently an active and able workman, competent to undertake the more difficult and responsible posts in the building of fortifications; he was a man of ambition as well as of resource, willing to enter the open door to mount the "fiery courser of opportunity;" he was capable of patience as well as of vigorous action; he could bide his time in Egypt as well as strike the blow when the hour was ripe; he was courageous and self-confident, not shrinking from the dangerous position of heading a revolt against the rightful ruler of the land (ver. 6); he was utterly unscrupulous as to the measures he adopted to retain the loyalty of his people (vers. 8—10); he was prepared to abolish the accepted and true faith, and import a false and low religion; also to rid himself of the best men as priests, introducing the lowest to take their place (1 Kings xii. 31). All piety and principle he subordinated to the one end of preserving his throne and his dynasty. Thus he made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

III. HIS REPUTATION. For reputation is to be very carefully distinguished from character. A man may have a good reputation, and, in the sight of him who is the Truth, a very bad character; such were the Pharisees of our Lord's time, and such have been hypocrites of all time. Or a man may have a bad reputation and a noble character; such was Paul amongst his countrymen; such have been the reformers and martyrs of all ages. But Jeroboam's reputation has answered to his character. He was, indeed, regarded as a man of considerable ability (1 Kings xi. 24); but the one chief and continual association with his name is that of the great mischief-maker, the man who wrought dire evil to his country; he was known, and is known, as the man "who made Israel to sin." From his character, career, and reputation we may be reminded: 1. That it is right to be concerned about our career, right to wish for one that is bright and pleasant and honourable; and with this desire in our heart we should (1) ask for Divine guidance and aid; (2) do all that industry, patience, and moderation will accomplish to compass that end; and (3) be quite prepared to take a lower place if that should be the will of our heavenly Father concerning us. 2. That it is of more importance that we should possess a good reputation; not that we need trouble ourselves about what the sinful or the foolish are saying of us, but that we should care much to win the esteem of the good and wise. 3. That the *essential* thing is a sound character in the sight of God. That is the foundation of all; on it rests a good reputation and a bright career. Therefore let us ask ourselves *what we are;* and let us be dissatisfied with ourselves unless we can believe that we are true disciples of Jesus Christ, "children of our Father who is in heaven," resembling him in spirit and in principle.—C.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Abijah: the lessons of his life.* These concluding verses, which dispose of the latter end of the life of Abijah, may bring before us the lessons which are to be gathered from his career.

I. THE SLIGHTNESS AND VALUELESSNESS OF HUMAN FAME. He was a descendant of David, and a king reigning at Jerusalem, and he gained a somewhat brilliant victory over his rival at Mount Ephraim—"the rest of his acts and his ways and sayings are written in the story of the Prophet Iddo;" but who reads them there, or who can tell us anything of what is there contained? In the Book of the Kings (1 Kings v. 7) we are referred to our text for the details of his career. But how scanty we find them to be! How little do we know of this once proud and "mighty" monarch; and how content we are that we know so little! And of what entire valuelessness to him would any fuller knowledge on our part be! We need not be concerned that our name and fame will traverse so small a part of this globe, and travel so short a space of time; that we shall be so soon forgotten. Kings and statesmen, whose chances of fame were far greater than ours, have found how ephemeral and how worthless a thing is fame. To be loved by those whom we have blessed, to be esteemed by the good and true, to be honoured of God to take some part in the promotion of his glorious kingdom,—that is the heritage to be coveted and to be gained.

II. THE BRITTLENESS OF EARTHLY FORTUNE. When Abijah ascended the throne of Judah, he had, probably, good reason for expecting a long period of honour and enjoyment. But three short years brought his hopes down to the ground. Some disease showed itself in his frame, or some accident befell him, or some treacherous blow struck him, and he went down to the grave with his early hopes unfulfilled. And who shall say that the young man of our acquaintance, of our connection, of our affection, who has such bright prospects before him, will not find, by a sad disillusion, that the term of his happiness and his honour is a very brief one; that a few years, or even months, will bring him to his grave? "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. . . . The world passeth away . . . but *he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*"

III. THE DANGER OF GREAT SUCCESS. We read in the preceding verse (ver. 20) that Jeroboam never "recovered strength again" after his humiliating defeat at Mount Ephraim. We might with equal truth say of Abijah that he never recovered from his success. He was apparently elated by it, and, in the perilous mood of complacency, he gave himself up to culpable domestic licence (ver. 21). His latter days were spent in home luxuries and (it is only too likely) in revelries and follies. His success was too much for him; as, indeed, success very often proves to be. Many men can stand misfortune; comparatively few can stand prosperity. It is a "slippery place," where the unguarded human spirit falls, and is badly bruised, if not broken. If the tide of success should set in, whether of wealth, or honour, or power, or affection, let there be unusual watchfulness and multiplied devotion; for the hour of prosperity is that hour when the archers of the enemy will be busy with their arrows.

IV. THE VALUE OF WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS IN THE SERVICE OF THE SUPREME. Where shall we look to find the fatal flaw that accounts for this royal failure? We find it here (1 Kings xv. 3). Abijah's heart was "not perfect with the Lord his God;" that is to say, his heart was "divided," and therefore he was "found faulty" (Hos. x. 2). He did not seek God "with his whole heart." He was willing enough to try and charm with the Divine Name and the Divine will and Law (see vers. 5—10), but he was not prepared to walk uprightly and faithfully, as "the heart of David his father," before the Lord his God. If our devotion be nothing more than a desire to have God on our side in the day of battle, we shall show small consistency of conduct and little excellence of character. The religious character that will stand the test both of sunshine and shadow is that of the man who realizes the supreme claims of God, his Father and his Saviour, and who solemnly and determinately dedicates himself, heart and life, to "the Lord his God." It is only whole-heartedness in the service of Christ that will ensure us against the perils of adversity and prosperity.—C.

Vers. 1, 2, 21, 22.—*The successor of Rehoboam.* I. HIS NAME. Abijah, "whose father is Jehovah" (1 Kings xiv. 1); Abijam, "father of the sea," *i.e.* a maritime man (1 Kings xiv. 31; xv. 1); or Abia (LXX.). If Abijam be not a clerical mistake, then the hypothesis is at least interesting that the Chronicler adopted the form Abijah because he did not intend to describe this king's reign as wicked, while the writer of the Kings, having this intention, frequently selected the form Abijam (Kitto).

II. HIS MOTHER. Micaiah, or Maacha (ch. xi. 20), the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah, and the daughter (equivalent to granddaughter by the mother's side) of Absalom (ch. xi. 20), or Abishalom (1 Kings xv. 2). The notion (Bähr) that Abijah's wife, the mother of Asa, was also called Maacah (ch. xv. 10) is not necessary, and still less the hypothesis (Bertheau) that in this place the name of Abijah's wife has been substituted for that of his mother.

III. HIS WIVES. Fourteen in number, of whom one was (on the supposition just named) Maacah, the names of the others being unknown. Like his father Rehoboam, grandfather Solomon, and great-grandfather David, Abijah practised polygamy. A parent's vices are considerably easier to copy than his virtues. Those also are likelier than these to be transmitted by heredity.

IV. HIS OFFSPRING. Twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. Of the former only one is known, Asa his successor, the rest having disappeared from the stage of history as from that of time. Obscurity, the common lot of men; yet not always a disadvantage in itself, or a proof of inferior merit. Some of the world's greatest men have been unknown to their contemporaries; and Abijah's unnamed sons may have been superior persons to Asa.

V. His reign. 1. Its *sphere.* Judah, the southern kingdom, Jeroboam still exercising sovereignty over the northern. 2. Its *seat.* Jerusalem, the capital of Israel being Samaria. 3. Its *duration.* Three years, beginning in the eighteenth and ending in the twentieth year of Jeroboam. 4. Its *character.* Troubled. "There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam."

VI. His end. 1. His *death.* "He slept with his fathers" (ch. xiv. 1). 2. His *burial.* "He was laid in the city of David." 3. His *biography.* The story of his life, of his acts, ways, and sayings, was written by the Prophet Iddo.

VII. His character. 1. His *ability.* Undoubted. (1) A vigorous ruler (ver. 21); (2) an able speaker (ver. 4); (3) a powerful reasoner (vers. 8—12); and (4) a valiant leader. 2. His *piety.* Decided. Notwithstanding his polygamy, he was (1) sincere (vers. 10, 11), (2) lively (ver. 12), (3) trustful (ver. 18), and (4) courageous (ver. 12), though (5) not perfect (1 Kings xv. 3).

Lessons. 1. Jehovah in the heart is better than Jehovah in the name. 2. A weak and wicked father may have a capable and good son. 3. The value of a man's life is not determined by the length of his days. 4. One may have faults and yet be religious. 5. Every one should strive to live so as to be remembered for good after death.—W.

Vers. 3—19.—*A great war in a short reign.* I. The contending armies. (Ver. 3.) 1. *Their leaders.* Of the army of Judah, Abijah; of the host of Israel, Jeroboam—both capable generals, and each the inspiring spirit of his troops. 2. *Their numbers.* Of Judah, four hundred thousand men—one hundred thousand fewer than Joab numbered to Judah; of Israel, eight hundred thousand—exactly the number Joab counted to Israel (2 Sam. xxiv. 9). 3. *Their quality.* (1) Abijah's troops were (*a*) heroes of war, veterans experienced in former campaigns under Rehoboam, and (*b*) chosen or picked men, literally, "men of youth," whose powers were at their best (Jer. xviii. 31). (2) Jeroboam's soldiers were also (*a*) chosen men and (*b*) mighty men of valour. Thus both armies were well matched. 4. *Their position.* Over against each other, in the vicinity of Mount Zemaraim, near Bethel (Josh. xviii. 22)—"probably the large ruin *Samrah*, north of Jericho" (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 427), and perhaps at that time the northern limit of Abijah's territory (Ewald); obviously so close to one another that to them the words of Shakespeare ('King Henry V.,' act iv. chorus) may be fitly applied—

"From camp to camp, thro' the foul womb of night,
The hum of either army stilly sounds,
That the fix'd sentinels almost receive
The secret whispers of each other's watch:
Fire answers fire: and through their paly flames
Each battle sees the other's umber'd face:
Steed threatens steed, in high and boastful neighs
Piercing the night's dull ear; and from the tents,
The armourers, accomplishing the knights,
With busy hammers closing rivets up,
Give dreadful note of preparation."

II. The speech of Abijah. (Vers. 4—12.) 1. *Whence spoken.* From Mount Zemaraim, in Ephraim, as Jotham had formerly spoken to the Shechemites from Mount Gerizim (Judg. ix. 7). 2. *To whom addressed.* To Jeroboam and all Israel. Generals commonly harangue their troops before going into action (1 Sam. iv. 9; 2 Sam. x. 11, 12; 2 Chron. xviii. 30; cf. 'King Henry V.,' act iv. sc. 3); Abijah directs his speech to his foes, as David did to Goliath (1 Sam. xvii. 45), and Rabshakeh to the envoys of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 28—35; cf. 'Richard II.,' act iii. sc. 3). 3. *Of what composed.* Of a long, earnest argument, dissuasive, and appeal, for the purpose of inducing Jeroboam and his warriors to desist from their mad enterprise of attempting to conquer Judah. According to Abijah they could not succeed, for a variety of reasons. (1) Their rebellion was a sin against their own better knowledge (ver. 5)—a sin against the light. They knew, or might have known, that Jehovah the God of Israel had given the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt, *i.e.* by a perpetual covenant (Numb. xviii. 19). This promise had been made to David (2 Sam. vii. 12—16), confirmed to Solomon (1 Kings ix. 4, 5), and reported to Jeroboam (1 Kings xi. 31—38), who must have known that whatever sanction he had from Jehovah to ascend the throne of Israel, he had none to aspire after that of Judah. Abijah's statement was true only of the throne of Judah; the sovereignty of undivided Israel was guaranteed to David and his sons on conditions which had not been fulfilled. Jehovah's language concerning David's throne has been realized in Christ, to whom the absolute and unbroken supremacy over God's spiritual Israel has been committed for ever by a covenant of salt (Ps. ii. 6; lxxii. 17; Dan. vii. 13, 14). Hence rebellion against the authority of Christ cannot prosper. (2) Their rebellion was a revolt against their rightful lord (ver. 6). Though Jeroboam had beforehand been informed of Jehovah's intention to wrest ten tribes from Rehoboam, it was none the less an act of insubordination on the part of Jeroboam and the Israelites to raise the standard of revolt against the son of Solomon. So the Divine foreknowledge that men will sin, reject Christ, and continue in unbelief, does not render it the less culpable on their part so to do. Christ, the Son of David, is their rightful Sovereign (Acts x. 36), and to disown his regal authority is to be guilty of spiritual high treason. (3) Their rebellion was promoted and fostered by wicked men (ver. 7). Jeroboam had collected round him an army of vain men—light persons like those Abimelech on a former occasion had hired to follow him (Judg. ix. 4); children of Belial, or of worthlessness, of the stamp of Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 17), or of those who followed David when he rescued his wives from the spoilers of Ziglag (1 Sam. xxx. 32); "lewd fellows of the baser sort" like those who assaulted the house of Jason (Acts xvii. 5); "men of the most abandoned principles and characters, or men without consideration, education, or brains" (Adam Clarke). Hence it was impossible their nefarious project could thrive (Prov. iii. 35; Ps. i. 6). (4) Their rebellion was aggravated by the time when it had been conceived and carried out, viz. at a time when Solomon's son had not been able to withstand them, having but newly ascended the throne, and as a consequence been unprepared when the mine, as it were, was sprung beneath his feet (ver. 7). Abijah speaks of Rehoboam as having been at the time of Jeroboam's rebellion "young and tender-hearted;" but, as Rehoboam was then forty-one years old, Abijah may have purposed by the expression to allude to his inexperience as a king, which laid him open to be misled by designing men, or to the instability of his throne, which would naturally invite the attacks of watchful adversaries. (5) Their rebellion was supported only by human warriors and golden calves (ver. 8). But vain is the help of man, even when the battle is against a fellow (Ps. lx. 11; cviii. 12), and much more when against God (Ps. ii. 1). "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host" (Ps. xxxiii. 11), as Israel afterwards often came to know (Hos. x. 13); and they that trust in golden calves or idols of silver and gold are like unto them (Ps. cxv. 8; cxxxv. 18), and shall eventually be put to shame (Isa. xlii. 17; Hos. viii. 5). (6) Their rebellion was being maintained in the interest of idolatry (ver. 9). Although Jeroboam had been expressly informed that Solomon's apostasy had been the cause of the division of his kingdom (1 Kings xi. 33), and that the permanence of his own throne depended on his steadfast adherence to the religion of Jehovah (1 Kings xi. 38), yet had he wickedly ejected the priests of Jehovah from their offices, and instituted a new order of priesthood for the golden calves and other idols he had set up (1 Kings xii. 28—31). Nay, as if to pour contempt upon the true religion, he followed the fashion of heathen nations both in the kind of persons he admitted to the sacerdotal office, and in the rites of initiation with which these were installed. The former were selected from the lowest of the people, and the latter were of the simplest description. Any one who could bring the necessary offerings for consecration, "a young bullock and seven rams" (cf. Exod. xxix. 1), was admitted to the new hierarchy, and no questions were asked. This was all the recognition Jeroboam made of the true worship of Jehovah. (7) Their rebellion was being prosecuted against those who adhered to the true worship of Jehovah (ver. 10). Abijah in this verse gives a better account of himself than the writer of the Kings does (1 Kings xv. 3)—a natural and common, if not altogether justifiable, weakness. The probable explanation is that, while clinging to the idolatrous abominations introduced by Solomon and Rehoboam, Abijah had not abandoned the forms of the

Mosaic cultus (vers. 10, 11). Like multitudes before and since, he and his people conceived it might be possible to do homage on equal terms to Jehovah and heathen divinities, which it was not (Isa. xlii. 8); just as many in the present day fancy they can serve God and mammon, which they cannot (Matt. vi. 24). (8) Their rebellion was directed against Jehovah himself (ver. 12), who was present in the camp of Judah as Captain, as he had been in the days of the conquest (Josh. v. 14), and as he still is, in the Person of Christ, in the army of the New Testament Church (Matt. xxviii. 20). This constituted the hopelessness of Jeroboam's attack (Exod. xv. 3—7; 1 Sam. ii. 10; Job xli. 10), as it does still of every assault upon the Church of Christ (Acts v. 39; xxiii. 9). No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper (Isa. liv. 17; Matt. xvi. 18). That Jehovah remained in Judah in the midst of so much corruption was entirely owing to his gracious covenant with David (1 Kings xii. 36); that Christ continues in the New Testament Church even when overrun with errors in doctrine and worship, as well as marred by defects in practice, is owing solely to his own faithfulness and truth (Matt. xxviii. 20). (9) Their rebellion was foredoomed to failure, because the alarm-trumpets of Jehovah's priests were against them (ver. 12). Those alarm-trumpets were "the divinely appointed pledges that God would remember his people in war, and deliver them from their enemies" (Numb. x. 9). Against the Midianites Moses sent into the field, along with twelve thousand warriors, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy instruments and the trumpets to blow in his hand" (Numb. xxxi. 6). So the duty of Christian ministers is to sound an alarm in God's Name against every thing and person that would injure Christ's Church. Were this always done, timeously and earnestly, ultimate victory for the Church would be ensured (Acts xx. 31; 1 Cor. iv. 14; Col. i. 28).

III. The ambushment of Jeroboam. (Vers. 13, 14.) 1. *Skilfully prepared.* (1) By Jeroboam. Wicked men often possess high talent, and, though not pious, make splendid generals, eminent statesmen, successful merchants, etc. (2) While Abijah was orating. Neither praying nor preaching will suffice without watching. While performing every duty earnestly and thoroughly (Eccles. ix. 10), it must not be imagined that prudence, foresight, and vigilance are not duties. The Christian, while praying always with all prayer and supplication, must take unto himself the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 13—18). (3) Round about Judah. That Abijah had not perceived the stratagem of his opponent is explicable—he had been preoccupied with his harangue; that his generals and soldiers were not on the alert was hardly to their credit, even if they were listening to their monarch's eloquence. At any rate, as Jeroboam circumvented Abijah and his army, while engaged in what might be termed a religious duty, an attempt to avert the calamity of war and to promote the interests of peace, so does the prince of the power of the air commonly select the moment when Christ's soldiers are engaged in some religious service to cast around them his snares. 2. *Courageously met.* Though surprised, the men of Judah were not thrown into panic. Realizing their danger, they confronted it: (1) With faith: "they cried unto Jehovah," whom they believed to be their Captain (ver. 12)—an excellent lesson for the Church (collectively and individually), which, though professing to regard Christ as her Captain, does not always turn to him for help in duty or relief in difficulty, but often repairs to worldly policy, human wisdom, or material props and defences. (2) With hope: "The priests sounded with their trumpets," thus showing they anticipated victory. So should the Church of Christ never enter the field against her adversaries in a doubtful, but always in a confident, spirit (Ps. lx. 12; cviii. 13), expecting to be victorious (Rom. viii. 37). (3) With spirit: "The men of Judah gave a shout"—not merely sounded with their war-trumpets (Bertheau, Keil), but shouted like men contending for the mastery (Exod. xxxii. 18), as soldiers do when rushing into battle (Josh. vi. 20; Judg. xv. 14; 1 Sam. xvii. 20). So should the Church give expression to her confident anticipations of victory in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Ps. cxxxii. 9; cxlix. 3, 5; Eph. v. 19).

IV. The victory of Judah. (Vers. 15—18.) 1. *The source of it.* God. Not Abijah or Judah, but Elohim smote Jeroboam and all Israel. "Safety ['victory,' Revised Version] is of the Lord" (Prov. xxi. 13), and "it is he that giveth salvation [or, 'deliverance'] unto kings" (Ps. cxliv. 10). "Jehovah is a Man of war," sang Miriam (Exod. xv. 3); while David owned, "He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight" (Ps. xviii. 34; cxliv. 1). 2. *The time of it.* "As the men of Judah shouted."

So "the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him" (Ps. cxlv. 18); and "whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered" (Joel ii. 32; Acts ii. 21; Rom. x. 13), even while they are calling (Isa. lxv. 24). Cf. the rescue of Jehoshaphat at Ramoth-Gilead (ch. xviii. 31). 3. *The ground of it.* "Because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers" (ver. 18). That Jehovah should prove a Buckler to them that trusted in him accorded exactly with the representations of the Divine character furnished by Scripture (Gen. xv. 1; Deut. xx. 1; Josh. i. 9; Ps. xvii. 7; cxv. 9), and had frequently been verified in the experience of both sections of the kingdom—Joshua's soldiers at Jericho (Josh. vi. 12, etc.), and Gideon's at the well of Harod (Judg. vii. 1, 21), because they trusted in the sword of Jehovah more than in their own weapons. So David prevailed over the Philistine (1 Sam. xvii. 45), Hezekiah over the Assyrian king, and the Philistines (2 Kings xviii. 5, 8) and the Reubenites over the Hagarites (1 Chron. v. 20). Confidence in God the strongest guarantee a Christian can have of emerging triumphantly from any moral or spiritual conflict (Ps. xxvi. 1; xxxiii. 20, 21; Isa. xii. 2; 2 Cor. i. 10; Rom. viii. 38). 4. *The extent of it.* (1) Jeroboam's army was routed (vers. 15, 16). (2) Five hundred thousand chosen men were slain. A slaughter so terrific suggests that the numbers must have been exaggerated; and certainly nothing like it can be cited from either ancient or modern warfare. If, therefore, fifty thousand should not be read instead of five hundred thousand (Rawlinson), the figures may be regarded as a popular expression of the opinion of contemporaries of the war that Jeroboam lost more than half of his troops (Keil). Cf. Shakespeare's description of a routed army: "The king himself, of his wings destitute, the army broken," etc. ('Cymbeline,' act v. sc. 3). (3) The kingdom of Israel was completely prostrated (ver. 18). Their power to harass Israel was seriously impaired, which confirms the preceding statement that no ordinary blow had been inflicted on Jeroboam's army. (4) Several cities with their surrounding domains were captured—Bethel, the present-day *Beitin*, an old patriarchal settlement (Gen. xii. 8; xxviii. 19; xxxv. 1, 6), and one of the seats of Jeroboam's idolatrous worship (1 Kings xii. 29, 33), with the townships or villages in the district; Jeshanah, probably the Isanas of Josephus ('Ant.,' xiv. 15. 12) and the Jesuna of the LXX., occurring only here, and identified with the modern *'Ain Sinia* north of Bethel, with many rich springs and rock-tombs in the vicinity (Conder, 'Handbook,' p. 416; Riehm, 'Handwörterbuch,' i. 705); and Ephraim, or Ephron (LXX., Vulgate), the former of which points to the Ephraim near Bethel (Josephus, 'Wars,' iv. 9. 9), whither Jesus retired (John xi. 54), while the latter can hardly be connected with Mount Ephron on the south-west border of Benjamin (Bertheau), but must also be sought in the neighbourhood of Bethel. (5) Jeroboam never again recovered strength (ver. 20). He outlived the war by several, and Abijah by two, years; but the decisive defeat he had sustained left him ever afterwards a crippled and comparatively feeble sovereign.

Lessons. 1. The sinfulness of unjustifiable rebellion. 2. The horrors of war. 3. The political value of religion. 4. The power of faith. 5. The reward of sin.—W.

Ver. 20.—*The career of Jeroboam.* I. AN EXAMPLE OF DISAPPOINTED AMBITION. A striking illustration of how "vaulting ambition overleaps itself, and falls on the other side." Its stages reveal the insatiable character of that "fire and motion of the soul which will not dwell in its own narrow being, but aspires beyond the fitting medium of desire" (Byron). 1. *Promoted to a position of trust.* Originally a servant of Solomon, he was appointed master of works for the house of Judah, *i.e.* superintendent of the Ephraimite contingent of workmen (1 Kings xi. 28). 2. *Plotting sedition.* Invested with "brief authority," he began to meditate ambitious thoughts, which probably the Shilonite with his prophetic glance discerned (1 Kings xi. 37). 3. *Married to a princess.* Compelled to flee from Palestine, he found in Egypt, at the court of Shishak, both a harbour of refuge and a balm for his wounds—he became the husband of a princess and the brother-in-law of Pharaoh (1 Kings xi. 40). 4. *Further promotions.* Recalled to Palestine, he was first elected a spokesman of the northern tribes in their diplomatic dealings with Rehoboam, and ultimately chosen to be their sovereign (1 Kings xii. 20). 5. *More sedition.* Barely was he seated on the throne of Israel, than he adopted measures to render permanent the separation of the two kingdoms; turning his back upon Jehovah, and setting up a new and rival religion to the Jehovah-cultus in Judah (1 Kings xii. 28). 6. *Renewed ambition.* Not content with this, he aimed at the subjugation of the southern empire. 7. *Final collapse.* This point reached, he hastened rapidly towards an ignominious end. Byron says—

> "One breast laid open were a school,
> Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule."

One may be permitted to doubt this!

II. AN INSTANCE OF MISAPPLIED ABILITY. That Jeroboam as youth and man, as private person and public official, as servant and sovereign, possessed high capacities, need not be questioned. Energy, industry, enthusiasm, ambition, faculty for organization, power of impressing, directing, leading, and ruling others—qualities needful for generalship, statesmanship, kingship—appear all to have belonged to him in more than ordinary measure; yet in every situation of life in which he was placed these powers were misapplied. The governing idea of his soul was to use all, in himself and others, for the advancement of his private interest. For this end he fomented sedition amongst his countrymen, encouraged disaffection amongst the subjects of Solomon, took advantage of Rehoboam's inexperience to raise the standard of revolt, perverted to wicked purposes the high position as a sovereign to which he in providence attained, did his utmost to propagate irreligion, diffuse idolatry, foster immorality, dissolve the fabric of social order, crush and annihilate the true worshippers of Jehovah. The annals of mankind afford many illustrations of the same phenomenon—magnificent powers of body and mind prostituted to ignoble ends, *e.g.* Samson, Saul, and Judas from sacred, Cæsar (Julius), Mark Antony, and Napoleon from profane history.

III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITIES. 1. *When promoted by Solomon* to be master of works for the house of Joseph, he might, with his commanding talent and great force of character, have done much to soothe the ruffled spirits of his countrymen, and so have nipped the poisonous flower of revolution in the bud. But he did not; rather he acted on a contrary hint. 2. *When recalled by the northern tribes* to be their spokesman, had he chosen, he might have poured oil upon the troubled waters, allayed the ferment of their passions, appealed to them to give the young king a trial, and remember the danger which would accrue to the empire from disunion—might have crushed down his own ambitious thoughts, and like Cæsar ('Julius Cæsar,' act iii. sc. 2)—not to speak of a greater (John vi. 15)—put bravely from him the crown which in the people's eyes he saw preparing for him. But he did not; rather, in the popular disaffection, he beheld that "tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune," and launched himself upon its stream without delay. 3. *When favoured by Providence* so far as to secure the crown, had he carried out the trust committed to him, to erect a kingdom in which the worship of Jehovah should be faithfully and purely maintained, he should have been established on his throne beyond the possibility of overthrow, and the house of Jeroboam should have shone with a lustre as brilliant as, if not excelling, that of the house of David. But he did not; rather in him was verified the sentiment—

> "That lowliness is young ambition's ladder
> Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
> But when he once attains the utmost round,
> He then unto the ladder turns his back,
> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend."
> ('Julius Cæsar,' act ii. sc. 1.)

Jehovah had set Jeroboam on the throne of Israel; Jeroboam when on the throne cast Jehovah behind his back (1 Kings xiv. 7—9).

IV. A MONUMENT OF DESERVED RETRIBUTION. Jeroboam, who might have attained to undying honour, reaped for himself a harvest of eternal infamy. To such a pitch of wickedness did he proceed, both in himself and in his people, whom he corrupted by his example and commanded by his authority, that not only did "the sin of Jeroboam" become ever afterwards proverbial as an expression for the highest possible impiety in an Israelitish ruler (1 Kings xv. 34; 2 Kings x. 31; xiii. 6; xiv. 24; xvii. 22), but it drew down upon him swift and appalling retribution. "The Lord smote him." 1. *In his army with defeat.* His troops were routed on the field of war, his fenced cities were captured, his military power was broken. 2. *In his house with bereavement.* The sudden death of his child Abijah was a sore stroke, to which was added a sorer in the curse that none other of the house of Jeroboam should come to his grave in peace (1 Kings xiv. 12, 13). 3. *In himself with disease.* To this the language of ver. 20 is believed by some to point (Clarke, Jamieson).

V. A VICTIM OF ALL-DEVOURING DEATH. Jeroboam succumbed to the fatal malady two years after the death of Abijah, and in the twenty-second year of his reign. He expired at Tirzah, and was buried with his fathers.

> "Sceptre and crown must tumble down,
> And in the dust be equal made
> With the poor crooked scythe and spade."

W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

This chapter commences Asa's long reign of forty-one years. Asa was son of Abijah and grandson of Maachah (ch. xv. 16; 1 Kings xv. 13). The reign was remarkable for the devotion of Asa to the true God, and for the signal successes given to him in consequence, but it did not reach its end without a mournful defection on Asa's part from trust in God (ch. xvi. 2—4, 12), which entailed its reward (ch. xvi. 9), and which has left tarnished for all ages a fame that would otherwise have been fairest among all the kings of Judah. The disjointed and grudging parallel to the forty-eight verses of this and the following two chapters respecting Asa, in Chronicles, is comprised within the sixteen verses only of 1 Kings xv. 8—24.

Ver. 1.—**Buried . . . in the city of David** (see our note, ch. xii. 16). **Asa his son.** If, according to the suggestion of our note, ch. x. 8 and xii. 13, the alleged forty-one years of the age of Rehoboam be made twenty-one, it will follow that Asa could not now be more than a boy of some twelve years of age. It is against that suggestion that there is no sign of this, by word or deed, in what is here said of the beginning of Asa's reign; the signs are to the contrary, especially taking into the question the indications given us respecting the tendencies, if not contradicted, of the queen-mother Maachah (ch. xv. 16; 1 Kings xv. 13), and it is not supposable that a boy of twelve years of age could contradict them. This point must be held still moot. **In his days . . . quiet ten years.** No doubt one cause of this was the defeat that Jeroboam and Israel had sustained at the hands of Abijah (ch. xiii. 18—20). It appears also, from 1 Kings xv. 19, that after that defeat a league was instituted between Abijah and the then King of Syria: "There is a league between me and thee, and between *my father and thy father.*" And these things, with Israel's new kings, and *perhaps* Asa's extreme youth, would have favoured the repose of the land.

Ver. 2.—**That which was good and right.** Our Authorized Version does not omit to mark the first three words with italic type, the simple and emphatic original being, *the good and the straight.*

Ver. 3.—**The altars of the strange (gods);** Hebrew, *the altars of the stranger*, meaning, of course, "the altars of the gods of the stranger." This expression, "strange gods," is found in the Authorized Version about thirteen times for the Hebrew נֵכָר, or הַנֵּכָר, and would be most correctly rendered, "The gods [or, 'god'] of the stranger," *i.e.* of the *foreigner*, as it is rendered in the solitary instance of Deut. xxxi. 16. **The high places.** Comp. ver. 5 and ch. xv. 17, which says, "But the high places were not taken away out of Israel;" and 1 Kings xv. 14, which says, "But the high places were not removed," without limiting this non-removal to "of Israel." On the question of this apparent inconsistency and surface-contradiction, see our Introduction, § 7, pp. xvi. 1 and xvii. 2. Further, it may here be well distinctly to note how little is even the apparent discrepancy or contradiction alleged in this subject, throwing in the analogous passages in Jehoshaphat's history (ch. xvii. 6; xx. 33), in case these may reflect any light on the question. Firstly, we will remove out of our way the parallel in 1 Kings xv. 14, with the observation that it is evident from its immediate context that it corresponds with the last statement of our Chronicles (ch. xv. 17), savouring of a *retrospective* summarizing of the compiler, not with the first statements (ch. xiv. 3, 5), which set forth Asa's prospective purpose of heart, his resolution, and, no doubt, his edicts. Secondly, we may notice that there is a plain-enough distinction made by the writer in vers. 3 and 5 respectively—the one saying that Asa "took away the high places," without any further limitation; the other saying within two verses, "Also out of all the cities of Judah" (note by the way here the suggestive stress laid upon "the *cities*," possibly as more easily coped with than country districts) "he took away the high places." The only legitimate inference (taking into account both the words used, and the fact that the last written are found *close upon* the former, with the significant conjunction "also") must be that some different information was intended in the two places. Ver. 3 finds Asa as much master of "Judah" as ver. 5. Therefore the natural interpretation of ver. 3 must be that Asa at once abolished "the high places" nearest home, nearest Jerusalem, most within his own personal reach; then "*also*" that he did and ordered the same to be done in "all the cities of Judah," and it *was* done at the time, if only for the time. Thirdly, include the statement of ch. xv. 17, if we do not insist (as we might insist very fairly when pressed on a point of alleged inconsistency or contradiction) on the fact that now the high places "of Israel" are distinctly designated, and that therein those *outlying* parts of Asa's more or less acknowledged sway *outside of Judah* and his thoroughest control are designedly described, let us instead take the help of an exactly analogous (and analogously alleged) discrepancy (ch. xvii. 7 compared with ch. xx. 33), and we find there that the very key with which to unlock the difficulty is provided to our hand. Jehoshaphat (ch. xvii. 6) "took away the high places;" "the people" (ch. xx. 33) did not faithfully and with a constant heart follow suit, but had failed to prepare, *i.e.* to turn "their hearts unto the God of their fathers." How well the juxtaposition of these very words would tell, nay, do tell, with the emphatic words of 1 Kings xv. 14! "Nevertheless *Asa's* heart was perfect with the Lord *all* his days;" and with our ch. xv. 17, "Nevertheless the heart of *Asa* was perfect *all* his days." In both these passages the antithesis is patent between *Asa's* heart and the *people's* hearts, between Asa's "*all* his days" and the people's uncertainty and apostasy. The fidelity of Bible history and its non-cunningly, non-fabulously devised tenor are gratefully corroborated by the inquisition made into such a supposed "discrepancy," "inconsistency," "contradiction." Notice once more the confirming indication, so far as it goes, of the one verb that commands the next verse, as there noted upon. **Brake down the images**; Hebrew, מַצֵּבוֹת. It occurs in the Authorized Version thirty-two times, and is rendered "pillar" or "pillars" twelve times; "image" or "images" nineteen times; and "garrisons" once. It appears simply to have slipped from the signification of *pillar* into the rendering of the word "image," by aid of the intermediate word "statue." It is used of the pillar or statue of Baal in 2 Kings iii. 2; x. 26, 27, with his name expressed; and in ch. xviii. 4; xxiii. 14, without that name expressed. **Cut down the groves**; Hebrew, וַיְגַדַּע אֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרִים. The verb here used implies the "cutting," "cutting down," "pruning" of trees. It is undoubtedly applied also to other cutting and cutting down, as of the "breaking" of a rod (Zech. xi. 10), of an arm (1 Sam. ii. 31), of horns (Jer. xlviii. 25), of bars or bolts (Isa. xlv. 2). It occurs in all twenty-three times. It is here employed to describe the destroying of what according to the Authorized Version are called "groves" (Septuagint, ἄλσος; Vulgate, *lucus*)—a word which with little doubt misleads for the rendering of our אֲשֵׁרִים. Before this same word we have also another Hebrew verb for "cutting," of very frequent occurrence in its simple and metaphorically derived uses included, viz. כָּרַת. The first uses of this verb with the above word are found in Judg. vi. 25, 26, 30. That word means literally "fortune," but in its ultimate derivation "straightness," and hence supposed to designate, in Phœnician and Aramæan idolatry, Astarte or the planet Venus, who is constantly associated in such idolatry with Baal (Judg. iii. 7). But see for the first occurrence of the word, Exod. xxxiv. 13, where there is no express mention of Baal, but where the idolatries of the Amorite, Canaanite, Hittite, Hivite, Perizzite, and Jebusite are being spoken of. When we take into consideration the probable ultimate derivation of the word, the fact of the verbs that speak of "cutting" being uniformly applied to what it represents, the "burning" to which this was condemned (Judg. vi. 26) when cut down, and a series of statements that represent it as "set up *under every* green tree" (1 Kings xiv. 23; 2 Kings xvii. 10; see also 1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings xxi. 7; xxiii. 6; ch. xv. 16), it not only becomes perfectly certain that "grove" and "groves" cannot rightly render the word, but directs us with the light of those passages that speak of it coupled with Baal as an object of worship, and that speak of prophet and priest called by its name (Judg. iii. 7 (compared with ii. 13; x. 6; 1 Sam. vii. 4); 1 Kings xviii. 19; 2 Kings xxi. 3; xxiii. 4), to the strong conviction that it should be at once written with a capital letter, and rendered as a proper name; that it may possibly be a synonym with Ashtoreth, *i.q.* Astarte, or a representation in wooden pillar. stock or trunk fashion, of some supposed aspect of her passion or dominion, very likely in the voluptuous or sensual direction (see the nevertheless very doubtful Septuagint and Vulgate, ch. xv. 16; and Vulgate, Judg. iii. 7). Conder, in 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 187, 2nd edit., speaks of "Baal-peor (Numb. xxv. 3) as identified by St. Jerome with the classical Priapus;" and adds "the *Asherah* (rendered 'grove' in our version) was also apparently a similar emblem" (2 Kings xxiii. 7). The analogy of the sacred tree of the Assyrians sculptured on the monuments of Nineveh ('Nineveh and Persepolis,' p. 299, Fergusson), which was probably a straight trunk or stock garlanded at certain times with ribbons and flowers, has been opportunely pointed to (see also Professor Dr. Murphy's 'Handbook: Chronicles,' p. 115).

Ver. 4.—**And commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers.** What an indication lies couched in this word "commanded" (confirmatory of the spirit of what is said above, in our previous verse-note) of the moral efforts of Asa, and that the efforts on which he may have largely relied for "taking away the high places" *were moral* efforts, rather than those of physical force.

Ver. 5.—**The images;** Hebrew, חַמָּנִים. The *images* spoken of here are, of course, not the same with those (noted upon already) of ver. 3. The present *khămmānim* are mentioned seven times beside, viz. Lev. xxvi. 30; ch. xxxiv. 4, 7; Isa. xvii. 8; xxvii. 9; Ezek. vi. 4, 6. Gesenius says *Khămmān* is an epithet of Baal as bearing rule over the sun (חַמָּה, "heat," or "the sun"), in the oft-found compound expression, בַּעַל חַמָּן; he thinks the plural (חַמָּנִים), invariably found in the Old Testament, is short for בְּעָלִים חַמָּנִים. He does not agree with the translation of Haenaker ('Miscell. Phœn.,' p. 50), "sun-image" by aid of the word סֶמֶל understood, images said to have been of a pyramid form, and placed in the most sacred positions of Baal-temples. This, however, is the rendering adopted by not a few modern commentators (so ch. xxxiv. 4). Gesenius would render "the Sun-Baal," or "the Sun-Lord," *i.e.* statues of the sun, representing a deity to whom (see 'Phœn. Inscript.') votive stones were inscribed. In his 'Thesaurus' (p. 489) Gesenius instances the Phœnician inscriptions, as showing that our *chĕmmānim* denoted statues of both Baal, the sun-god, and Astarte, the moon-goddess.

Ver. 6.—**He built fenced cities in Judah.** Though it is not said so here, it is very probable that Asa did again the work of Rehoboam (ch. xi. 5—12) which Shishak had done so much to undo (ch. xii. 4, 5, 8).

Ver. 7.—**We have sought him, and he hath given us rest.** In three successive verses the blessings of peace and *quiet*, and *no war* and *rest*, are recorded (Isa. xxvi. 1; Zech. ii. 5).

Ver. 8.—The "ten years' quiet" (ver. 1) begins to see its end. **Targets** (ch. ix. 15); **spears** (ch. xi. 12); for both, see 1 Chron. xii. 24. **Out of Benjamin, . . . shields and . . . bows.** The minuter coincidences of the history are very observable and very interesting; for see 1 Chron. viii. 40; xii. 2; and much earlier, Gen. xlix. 27; Judg. xx. 16, 17.

Vers. 9—15.—The remaining seven verses of this chapter are occupied with the account of the invasion of *Zerah the Ethiopian*, and the successful defence and reprisals of Asa.

Ver. 9.—**Zerah the Ethiopian;** Hebrew, זֶרַח הַכּוּשִׁי, the "Ethiopian," Greek and Septuagint rendering for "Cushite." In its vaguest dimensions Ethiopia, or Cush, designated Africa south of Egypt, but more concisely it meant the lands we now call Nubia, Sennaar, Kordofan, and part of Abyssinia. And these, roughly speaking, were bounded north, south, east, and west respectively by Egypt and Syene, Abyssinia, Red Sea, and Libyan Desert. When, however, Ethiopia proper is spoken of, the name probably designates the kingdom of Meroë (*Seba*, Gen. x. 7; 1 Chron. i. 9); and the Assyrian inscriptions make the Cushite name of the deified Nimrod *one with* Meroë), which was so closely associated at different times with Egypt, that sometimes an Egypt king swayed it (as *e.g.* some eighteen hundred years before *Shishak*, Sesostris fourth king of the twelfth dynasty), and sometimes *vice versâ* (as *e.g.* the three Ethiopian kings of the twenty-fifth dynasty—Shabak (*Sabakhou*), Sethos (*Sebechos*), and Tarkos (*Tirhakah*), whose reigning dates as between Ethiopia and Egypt are not yet certified). The name thus confined covers an irregular circular bulk of country between "the modern Khartoum, where the *Astapus* joins the true Nile, and the influx of the *Astaboras*, into their united stream." From the language of Diodorus (i. 23), harmonized conjecturally with Strabo (xviii. 821), the region may be counted as 375 miles in circumference and 125 miles in the diameter of the erratic circle, its extreme south point being variously stated, distant from Syene, 873 miles (Pliny, vi. 29. § 33); or, according to Mannert's book ('Geogr. d. Alt.,' x. 183), 600 miles by the assertion of Artemidorus, or 625 by that of Eratosthenes. Thence the "Cushite" extended probably to the Euphrates and the Tigris, and through Arabia, Babylonia, and Persia. Some, however, think that the Cushite now intended was the Ethiopian of *Arabia*, who had settlement near Gerar (Dr. Jamieson, in 'Comm.') as a nomadic horde, Dr. Jamieson quotes Bruce's 'Travels' to support this view, which seems a most improbable, not to say impossible, one nevertheless. The question as to the people intended will perhaps best be found in the solution of the question for whom the name of their king stands (see following note). **Zerah.** Hebrew as above. It is noteworthy that the four previous occurrences of this name—Gen. xxxvi. 13 and 1 Chron. i. 37, son of Reuel, grandson of Esau; Gen. xxxviii. 30 and 1 Chron, ii. 6, son of Judah and Tamar; 1 Chron. iv. 24, son of Simeon; 1 Chron. v. 6, 26, Hebrew text, son of Iddo, a Gershonite Levite—shew it as the name of an Israelite, or descendant of Shem. Our present *Zerah* is a *Cushite*, or descendant of Ham. The Septuagint forms of the name are *Ζαρέ*, *Ζαρά*, *Ζαρές*, or *Ζαραέ*, *Ζααραί*, or (Alexandrian) *Ἀκαρίας*. Although Professor Dr. Murphy says ('Handbook: Chronicles,' p. 116) that "it is plain that Zerah was a sovereign of Kush, who in the reign of Takeloth, about B.C. 944, invaded Egypt and penetrated into Asia," the balance of probability, both from the names themselves and the synchronisms of history, corroborated by the composition of Zerah's army (Cushim and Lubim, ch. xvi. 8) and some other tributary considerations, is that our *Zerah* was Usarken II., the fourth king of the twenty-second dynasty (or possibly Usarken I., the second king of the dynasty). The invasion of the text was probably in Asa's fourteenth year, his reign thus far being dated B.C. 953—940 (or B.C. 933—920 if Manasseh's be taken at only thirty-five instead of fifty-five years). The alleged army of this Zerah was an Egyptian army, largely made of mercenaries (compare the description of Shishak's army, ch. xii. 3). The present defeat of Zerah would go far to explain the known decline of the Egyptian power at just this date, *i.e.* some twenty-five to thirty years after Shishak. At the same time, it must be admitted that it is not possible to identify with certainty Zerah with either Usarken. Whether he is an unknown Arabian Cushite, or an unknown African Cushite of Ethiopia-above-Egypt, or one of the Usarkens, has yet to be pronounced. **Mareshah** (see our note, ch. xi. 8). It lay the "second mile" (Eusebius and Jerome) south of Eleutheropolis and between Hebron (1 Macc. v. 36; 2 Macc. xii. 35) and Ashdod (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xii. 8. § 6). The mention of the valley of Zephathah in the following verse will half identify its exact position. It is probable that Dr. Robinson ('Bibl. Res.,' ii. 67) and Tobler in his interesting 'Dritte Wand.' (pp. 129, 142), have reliably fixed the site one Roman mile south-west of the modern *Beit-Jibrin*. Mareshah is again mentioned in ch. xx. 37 and Micah i. 15, as quoted already, in references interesting to be consulted. **A thousand thousand.** Whether this number be correct or not, it may be noted that it is the largest alleged number of an army given in the Old Testament.

Ver. 10.—**The valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.** "At" some translate "belonging to," some more suitably to the exact connection "near." The Hebrew here for "valley" is גַּיְא. It can scarcely designate necessarily a "ravine." It is a valley in the sense of being a low, flat region, in which springs of water "broke out." From Numb. xxi. 20, the first occasion of its occurrence, to Zech. xiv. 5 it is found fifty-six times, and is always rendered (Authorized Version) "valley;" it is the word used in the celebrated passages, "Though I walk through the valley," etc. (Ps. xxiii. 4); and "Every valley shall be exalted" (Isa. xl. 4). The Septuagint, however, do *not* render it uniformly; but though they render it generally *φάραγξ*, they also have *νάπη*, *κοίλας*, *αὐλών*, and in some cases the simple word *γῆ*, as *e.g.* *ἐν γῇ* (*γε*) *Ἐννόμ* (ch. xxviii. 3; xxxiii. 6), which, nevertheless, elsewhere they describe as *φάραγξ Ἐννόμ* (Josh. xv. 8). The full explanation may probably be that the word is used for the valley that narrowed up to a ravine-like pass, or gorge, or that opened out into one of the *wide wadies* of the country; but see Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' Appendix, pp. 482, 483, new edit., 1866. It is supposed that Zephathah is not mentioned elsewhere, but see the Zephath of Judg. i. 17; and comp. Numb. xxi. 3; 1 Sam. xxx. 30, which Keil and Bertheau think conclusively to be not the same.

Ver. 11.—**Nothing with thee;** Hebrew, אֵין־עִמְּךָ. In the passage of very similar tenor (1 Sam. xiv. 6) the exact rendering is more easily fixed, "It is nothing to the Lord," *i.e.* it makes no difference to the Lord, "to save by many or by few." Probably the correcter rendering of our present Hebrew text would be, "It makes no difference with thee to help those whose strength is great or whose strength is nothing (between the much *even to* the none of strength)." Keil and Bertheau would translate "There is none beside thee." For another instance of the preposition בֵּין followed by לְ, see Gen. i. 6; and comp. ch. i. 13. The prayer must be counted a model prayer to an omnipotent Deliverer. It consists of opening invocation and the instancing of what postulates the crowning Divine attribute as the broad foundation for argument; of invocation repeated, warmed to closer clinging by the appropriating "our;" attended by the defining, though very universal petition, **Help us;** and followed by the argument of the unbending fidelity of trusting dependence, **For we rest on thee, and in thy Name we go against this** multitude; and, lastly, of invocation renewed or still determinedly sustained, pressed home by the clenching challenge of relationship and its correlative responsibility and presumable holy pride. The antithesis marked in these two last clauses will not escape notice—one made all the bolder, with the marginal reading of "mortal man" for the emphatic (a poetical, universal kind of) word here employed (אֱנוֹשׁ) for man.

Ver. 12.—**So the Lord smote the Ethiopians** As little as the real work was of the army of Asa, so little is said of even the mere *human method* by which this great victory was obtained for Asa and Judah. Again and yet again, in the following two verses, the glory is given to "the Lord."

Ver. 13.—**And the Ethiopians . . . before his host.** It is evident that these words, with the clauses they include, should be placed in brackets, and so leave "they," the subject of the verb "carried" in the last clause, to refer to its proper noun-subject, Asa and the people. **Gerar.** This place is mentioned as defining a full distant spot as the limit of the pursuit of the flying army. While it was nearly four hours south of Gaza, on the road to Egypt, it is calculated that it was more than twenty miles distant from Mareshah.

Ver. 14.—**The fear of the Lord came upon them;** *i.e.* on the cities round about Gerar. This and the following verse illustrate in particular the very graphic character which attaches to the entire stretch of the description of the scene, introduced so suddenly in ver. 9 and closing with ver. 15. **Much spoil.** The Hebrew word here used for "spoil" (בִּזָּה) is found only in Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, and *once* in Ezekiel (xxix. 19).

Ver. 15.—**The tents of cattle.** This word "tents" (אָהֳלֵי, *construct state*) is used just 335 times, and this is the only time it is spoken of as the place of cattle; there are, however, four passages looking the same way (Gen. xiii. 5; Judg. vi. 5; 2 Kings vii. 7; Jer. xlix. 29). It is the word used for the tabernacle of the wilderness many times, and many times for the place of abode that has highest associations (Ps. xv. 1; cxviii. 15), and of the usual abodes of people (ch. x. 16). The use of the word here, though unique, will occasion no surprise, considering the camping of the vast invading army. **Camels in abundance.** The mention of this spoil reminds us both where we are, on desert border (1 Sam. xxvii. 7—10; xxx. 16, 17), and what was the personality or nationality within some latitude of choice of the invaders. **Returned to Jerusalem.** The expression awakens inevitably, though inaptly, a reminiscence of Scripture language in strangest contrast—the climax in a description also, but of a victory infinitely vaster and grander and for ever (Luke xxiv. 52; Acts i. 12). This return of "Asa and the people that were with him" to Jerusalem dated the commencement of a period of comparative internal peace and reform for the kingdom of Judah, that lasted twenty-one years, and yet more of exemption from Egyptian attack, that lasted about three hundred and thirty years (B.C. circ. 940—609). It was a doubtful benefit, but Judah and Egypt came to be found in alliance against Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 3—6; xviii. 20, 21, 24; Isa. xxx. 2; Hos. vii. 11). The 'Speaker's Commentary' points out the interesting fact that this was one of the only two occasions known of the Jews meeting in open field either Egypt or Assyria (the other occasion being the unfortunate one of Josiah against Necho, ch. xxxv. 30), and adds, "Shishak, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, and Ptolemy I., were either unopposed or only opposed from behind walls."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—15.—*The quiet of ten years.* The former half of this chapter may be said to turn upon the welcome subject of the "quiet" (spoken of twice), the "no war" (spoken of once), and the "rest" (spoken of three times), which were now for ten years the portion of Judah. The tender youth and the pious promise of King Asa combined, no doubt, in the providence of God, with external circumstances, to secure that interval of quiet and repose from war from which many blessings were able to flow. We may notice generally, from such induction of illustrations as are yielded by the far less complex instances of those wars that belong to early history and to the histories of Scripture, some of the essential and intrinsic advantages and blessings of being, in this most impressive sense, "*quiet.*"

I. THE FREE, LEGITIMATE OPERATION OF THE AFFECTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE. What more dreadful subversion could be known to human nature than that love should be called and should become hate, and to labour to destroy human life should take the place of labour and zeal to save and to serve it! A nation that is at peace, and undisturbed by apprehension of war, is, by the very fact, delivered from being the victim of passions and of the sure operation of principles which must be only one degree less destructive to the unconscious subjects than to their designed and deliberately marked objects. War shakes not merely to its foundations this or that fabric of human society, but to its centre the fabric called human *nature itself*, which is compacted of affections, and, invisible though they may be, bound of no other bonds so real. Nothing, therefore, can justify it but that kind of necessity which declares, and can demonstrate what it declares, that that disaster of "*shaking*" confronts, and is within measurable distance of, the one alternative of shattering, and may therefore be counted the lesser evil or risk. The mutual hate and ill will of nations is a monster form of the sin of individual hate, and it is the violating on a gigantic scale of the second great commandment. It is true that there are some reliefs to this indictment, in respect of those composing the actual armies that confront one another, and of those who may be called the mere machinery of war; but there is little relief, indeed, to it, in regard to all who may be called principals. But in the "quiet" of a nation, its proper human affections find their opportunity and feel their way with some uniformity and some regularity of growth; not swept across, on the one hand, by the destructive tornado of animosity, prejudice, hate, and by all the hurricane of evil-doing; nor, on the other hand, goaded into partial, frenzied action by the anguished imagination, or the sickening sight of the unspeakable horrors of the actual battle-field—its mangled limbs, its cries and groans, and, for months afterwards, its bleeding hearts and wasted homes, and that whole crew of consequential vices and indirect calamities which overspread equally the land of conquered and conqueror!

II. THE THOUGHT OF A PEOPLE NOT SUBJECT TO THE UNHEALTHY STRAIN OF ONE USURPING INTEREST, ONE IMPERIOUS, TYRANNOUS, CONSTANT, EXCITING THEME, BUT FREE TO ASCERTAIN, TO FOLLOW, TO DEVELOP, THE LEADING AND THE INSTINCTS OF ITS PROPER GENIUS, WHATEVER THAT MAY BE. The loss is, of course, simply incalculable which has resulted from this one source of perversion, so varied in its operation. No eye, even with all the aid of historic retrospect, can track its disturbing, distracting, desolating tyranny. The interaction of the exceedingly diverse genius of different peoples must be equally significant with the same phenomenon as between different individuals (as *e.g.* even within the range of one family), and is amazingly tributary to the general and, let us say, universal well-being, when permitted, as it never yet *has* been, free play. For what areas of lands, bounded and unbounded in dimension, and through what stretches of the ages, has it substituted the ravaging headlong course of the turbid mountain-torrent for the flow of some beneficent river, with the generous, fertilizing streams, and the everywhere meandering rills, and the unnumbered perennial springs!

III. OUTER WORKS OF WIDE AND ENDURING INFLUENCE, AND MONUMENTS OF REAL AND ENDURING HONOUR, AMONG THE PEOPLE. With what a mourning heart we look back upon many, nay, the most part, of the greatest monuments of antiquity, and are often tempted to do so with cynical look and cynical speech! How many of them perpetuate the names and memory of those who were the scourges of their kind, the pestilences of human society, barriers to the health, wealth, and real well-being of the world, from whom they wring unwilling and undeserved honour, which time has reversed and revenged! By unfortunate irony of events, the useful works of our text even were largely those of the surer preparation for war; but we may perhaps lay more grateful stress on the thought that they are described rather as preparations *against war*, and defensive in character. Modern history and, in especial, the history, in God's mercy, through some few longer stretches of time, of Great Britain—that antitype in so many most real senses of Judæa of old—have done enough just to exemplify sufficiently the fact that, in "quiet," the useful works of art, the pursuit of the most beneficent sciences, the material well-being of a people, find the occasion to rise and to spread more equably. Material well-being may not at first seem to be of the highest moment, but (the expression being rightly understood) it certainly is of very high moment. The world was not meant to be a scene of beggary, nor the mere triumph of moral and spiritual force, with constant strain and effort over material exigence. So far as at any time and any where it is such a scene, it yields no honour to religion, no testimony to its power, no furtherance of its imperial claims.

IV. FAVOURABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FAIREST OF GROWTHS—THAT OF RELIGION, AND OF A HEALTHY STATE OF RELIGIOUS FEELING AND LIFE. The "quiet" and "rest" so repeatedly spoken of are instanced partly, indeed, as the reward of practical religion, but partly also (here as very emphatically elsewhere) as the opportunity of setting the house of God, its worship, and its priests and officers in order, and of breaking down and breaking away from the evil practices and habits of idolatry. It can scarcely be doubted that the scourge of war was used, has often been used, (1) as the just judgment on irreligion; (2) as a strong corrective and loud call to remember God and righteousness; and (3) as, generally speaking, such an awakener of the minds of men from that dormant, sluggish state that grows with hardening tendency on easy and undisturbed lives, that deep convictions of a religious character have been known to seed themselves under the unlikeliest of circumstances. There are abundant analogies to this in the individual life, which would quite prepare us for corresponding phenomena in the collective life of a nation. Nevertheless, the blessed reality has been of rare-enough occurrence. We cannot say that the holy dove lights often on such lands, in the midst of scenes where foes make fiends and where fiends triumph. War is too great a curse, and, where the blame may be the least, too directly the mark of the cloven foot. Golden harvest-fields of illimitable stretch do not bless the eye across rock-rent and gaping lands, of the scenery of which savagery is the first, the chief, the last characteristic. The still aspect of the rich, ever-ripening, abounding fruits of the retired, fertile, unstricken country, figure, not unaptly, the "no war," the "quiet," the "rest" of that land and nation, where the good leaven of God, by truth and practice, is blessedly leavening the whole lump.

Vers. 9—15.—***The human trust and prayer that herald Divine victory.*** Though God gives nothing for - that vanishing point—our merit, yet he constantly of old gave, now constantly gives, *in connection* with our own right-doings and right-praying, in order that his freest gifts may establish a healthy reaction on our experience and on our practical conduct. In the prayer, the appeal, the trust, the simple, practical account of Asa, according to the narrative contained within the compass of the above verses, we have vividly portrayed—

I. THE SOVEREIGN MASTER OF AND OVER ALL DIFFICULTIES. What comfort we forfeit, what source of courage we fling away, when we permit to lie as though the mere commonplace of faith, the truth that God is the Equal of *all* our confronting difficulties, let them be what they may—equal to them at all times, in all places, under all circumstances and conditions! How much is written in the canon of confidence, the charter of our "liberty of speech" at the throne of the heavenly grace (1 John v. 14, 15), where we read, "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that be hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"! As much as is thus written, so much do we lose, when we fail to live in the strength thereof. Asa *did* now live so.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF AN UNCONDITIONED, UNLIMITED, AND UNINTERFERING COMMITTING OF THE ENTIRE CONTROL OF A PRESSING CASE OF HUMAN DIFFICULTY INTO GOD'S HAND, WHILE MAN REMAINS SIMPLY OBEDIENT TO THE DUTY OF ACTIVE WORK. Sometimes we are called upon to stand by and stand still, and see, as it were, at one view, whether more or less sustained in its duration, "the salvation of the Lord;" but more frequently, as in the example of the present narrative, we are reminded of the advisableness and duty of putting our own hand and all our own strength into the work, which still depends supremely on the "saving strength" of God and his Anointed.

III. ONE EARNEST ENTREATY THAT HE WILL BE GRACIOUSLY PLEASED TO ASSUME THE SOVEREIGN MASTERY OF THE DIFFICULTY OF THE SITUATION, AND TAKE THE CONTROL OFFERED TO HIM, IN LOVING FAITH AND TRUST. God waits for this on the part of his creatures—our heavenly Father on the part of his children. He loves to be asked, and desires that we should seek and knock. And it is, indeed, a most inspiring thought, as well as a thought warranted of inspiration, that our prayer, faith, trust, avail so often as the very signal of *Divine* action.

IV. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE TRIUMPH, WHICH THENCE RESULTS, OBSERVABLE. A faith that can scarcely be described as anything better than a *lame* faith; a trust that is suspicious and doubtful all the while; a prayer that has no earnestness nor force of anticipation inherent in it, are poor preparation for conflict, and no augury of decisive and trenchant triumph. *They*, at all events, in *no* sense deserve, as certainly they cannot merit nor earn, the shout of victory when the day's sun is ready to go down. Such a *shout* follows on decision of mind, glowing love, and trust of heart, and a tone in prayer, divinely warranted, that might itself be mistaken for a summons.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 5 (latter part), 6, 7.—"*Rest on every side.*" It is significant enough that the Chronicler considered it a noteworthy fact that "in his days the land was quiet ten years." It indicates very forcibly that the chronic condition of the country in those times was one of unsettlement and strife. We should think it strange, indeed, if the historian of our country thought it worth while to record that for ten years the sovereign "had no war" (ver. 6). But it is painful to think that for very many centuries, in many lands, if not in all, war was regarded as the normal condition; an attitude of armed hostility toward the neighbouring nation was considered the necessary and natural relation. History then was not the account of discovery, of invention, of achievement, of advance; it was the story of international or civil war. This was the rule which, we may thank God, is now the exception, and which, we devoutly hope, will soon be obsolete. But for ten years the land "was quiet;" it had "rest on every side." We may glance at—

I. THE NATIONAL ASPECT OF THE SUBJECT. A nation has "rest on every side" when it (1) is at peace will all surrounding powers; and (2) is enjoying internal tranquillity, its various subjects living in concord, one class with another. To obtain and to preserve such a desirable condition, there need to be (1) a "foreign policy" that is not aggressive in aim or provocative in address; and (2) an internal administration that is based on justice, that promotes wholesome and fruitful labour, that encourages and rewards merit and ability, that observes a strict impartiality amidst all differences of custom and belief. Then there is likely to be "rest on every side," more especially if the citizens of the land are serving the Lord according to their conscientious convictions, and are continually seeking his blessing and asking for "peace in their time" (ver. 6). But let us rather consider—

II. THE INDIVIDUAL ASPECT OF IT. How shall we have "rest on every side"? 1. Not by *securing outward and temporal success.* A man may clasp the goal of honour, or of wealth, or of affection, and may think himself possessor of complete and lasting rest, and he may awake any morning to find that all his pleasant conditions are disturbed, and that the prize of peace is snatched ruthlessly from his brow. The heavens may be cloudless and the sun be shining in its full light and warmth to-day; but to-morrow those heavens may be draped in gloom, and the rain may be pelting pitilessly upon us. Not *that* way lies "rest on every side." 2. Nor by *going down into the grave.* The "rest of the grave" is only a false poetical metaphor. That is not rest which excludes all present consciousness and provides no refreshment and invigoration for the future. The darkness of death which the despairing suicide seeks and finds is *not* rest at all; it is entirely undeserving of the name; the word is a complete misnomer as thus applied. It is not rest on *any* side; it is defeat; it is loss; it is destruction. 3. It is found *in holy, filial service;* in the happy, honourable, rightful service of a Divine Redeemer. There is (1) peace with God—the rest that looks *upward;* (2) peace in our own heart—rest *within,* all our spiritual faculties consenting to the condition—the reason, the conscience, the will, the affections; (3) rest in relation to those that are *without*—a prevailing spirit of good will and of love toward all men—"rest on every side."—C.

Vers. 2, 3, 5.—*Destructive godliness.* Human energy and capacity show themselves in two forms—in the destructive and in the constructive. Though action of the latter kind is the more honourable and admirable of the two, yet that of the former is also useful and needful in its time. Moses did a very good work for the people of Israel when he ground to powder the golden calf; and Hezekiah, when he broke in pieces the brazen serpent and called it "a bit of brass;" and the Christians of Ephesus did a wise as well as a worthily sacrificial thing when they burnt the "books" out of which they had been making large profits for their pocket (Acts xx. 19). Destructive godliness sometimes indicates a devotedness, and sometimes renders a service which deserves to take high rank amongst the excellences and even the nobilities of human worth. We look at—

I. THE DESTRUCTIVE PIETY SHOWN BY THE KING. He removed the high places set apart for idolatrous worship, also the altars of false gods; he "cut down the groves" where moral and devotional abominations were likely to be committed; he "took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made" (1 Kings xv. 12). And that which was, perhaps, more than all this, as evidencing a sincerity and thoroughness of heart toward God, and justifying the language used by the Chronicler (ver. 2) concerning him, he *destroyed the idol of Maachah*, and even removed that idolatrous queen from the official dignity she had been enjoying. Asa, therefore, struck a very decisive and damaging blow at the idolatry of his time; he powerfully and effectually discouraged iniquity and immorality in three ways: 1. He showed his own personal and royal hatred of them. 2. He rebuked and punished the perpetrators of them. 3. He took away the means of indulging in them. By these measures he strove well and wrought successfully for the truth of God and for the purity of his people.

II. OUR OWN ACTION IN THE SAME DIRECTION. In what ways shall we serve God by a destructive piety? 1. By *promoting wise legislative measures.* There are evils which it is needless to name from which large numbers of people need to be protected. To be tempted by them is to be overcome, is to be slain by them; they are active sources of evil and of suffering, of ruin and of death; they ought to be suppressed; and one part of a Christian man's duty is to join his fellow-citizens in cutting down or "removing those high places" of the land. 2. *By excluding evil things and evil persons from the home.* There are men and there is literature concerning whom and concerning which we can only say that they are sources of defilement; and if we have not power, like an Oriental monarch, to forbid them the land, we can forbid them the home; we can see that, in respect of those who are in our charge and for whose well-being we are responsible, that these men and these books are well beyond reach. 3. *By putting down evil language.* This we may do, in many quarters, by firmly discountenancing and fearlessly condemning it; the voice of righteous reprobation will soon silence the profane and lascivious tongue. 4. *By expelling from our own life* that which imperils our moral or spiritual integrity. Every man must know, or should know, what habits (in eating or drinking, in recreation, etc.) are fascinating, absorbing, dangerous to himself; must know in what direction it is perilous to set out, lest he should go too far. There let him determinately bar the way; that threatening habit let him exclude rigorously from his life (see Matt. v. 29, 30).—C.

Vers. 2, 4, 6, 7.—*Constructive godliness.* It is better to construct than to destroy (see preceding homily), and though Asa did well in demolishing the strange altars and expelling the sodomites from the land, he did even better in (1) encouraging all Judah to seek God in worship and to obey his Law, and in (2) fortifying his territory against the enemy while the land was in his full possession (while the land was "yet before" them). The patriotism and the piety that expended themselves in spiritual and in material edification were of the best. We shall find their analogue among ourselves in—

I. BUILDING UP OURSELVES on our holy faith (Jude 20). A man's first duty is that which he owes to his own spirit; for God has given him that, above all things, to have in charge and to present pure and perfect before him at the last. We are, therefore, most sacredly bound to build up ourselves in faith, in love, in purity, in truthfulness, in moral and spiritual integrity, in mercy and magnanimity. And this we shall do (1) by the study of our Lord Jesus Christ (of his life and character); (2) by the worship of him and fellowship with him, both in the home and in the sanctuary; (3) by an earnest and prayerful endeavour to do and bear his will, and to follow his example until we attain to his likeness.

II. EDIFYING THOSE WHOM WE CAN INFLUENCE; bringing to bear upon the inmates of our home, upon those whom we employ (or by whom we are employed), upon our nearer neighbours, upon our fellow-townsmen, upon our fellow-worshippers and fellow-workers in the kingdom of God, all the strengthening, stimulating, elevating influence we can possibly command.

III. Caring for and consulting the welfare of our country. Asa built those "fenced cities in Judah" that he might make timely provision against the enemy and thus keep him off, or repel him if he attacked. What are the enemies of our native land? These are not to be found (chiefly) in invading hosts; there is but little to be feared from them. We find our national enemies in intemperance, in impurity, in dishonesty and fraud, in unconscientious and unfaithful labour, and, therefore, in poor and unsound production, in political charlatanism and pretence, in ecclesiastical bitterness. We want to call into the field forces that will expel these evils from the land. Where shall we find them? 1. *In Christ-like men;* in men imbued with the spirit, possessed of the principles, living the life, of Jesus Christ. 2. *In Christian institutions;* in earnest, working Churches; in Sunday schools; in temperance societies; in guilds for the inculcation of all that is pure and wholesome; in philanthropic associations of many kinds. 3. *In Christian literature.* Not only that which is distinctively religious, but that also which is sound in tone and spirit, which imparts and infuses a true idea of human character and human life.

Our patriotic work must be found in building up these; building up these men in our homes and circles by the influence of our Christian character; sustaining these institutions by generous gifts of time and strength and money; countenancing and supporting this wholesome, edifying literature. So shall *we* also "build and prosper."—C.

Vers. 8—15.—*The secret and the spirit of true defence.* We may learn from this narrative of unprovoked attack and triumphant defence—

I. That our utmost preparation will not secure us from attack. Asa endeavoured to make his little kingdom impregnable to assault by (1) fortifying the outposts, and (2) training and equipping a large army (vers. 7, 8). Nevertheless, the Ethiopians came up against him with an army far stronger than his. The military and naval preparations of one country usually incite to greater preparations in another, and instead of war becoming impossible because each nation is invulnerable, it becomes probable because the combative spirit has been developed; one nation considers itself challenged by another, and because a large number of professional men are eager to exert their power and improve their position. But not only does "history repeat itself" thus; we have here an illustration of a wider truth—that whatever efforts we may make to guard ourselves against the inroad of evils, we shall surely fail. Sickness of some kind will attack us; disappointment and disillusion will find their way to our heart; sorrow will surprise us; loss and separation will befall us; death will knock at our door. There are no fortifications we can construct, there are no forces we can raise, be we never so vigilant and alert, which will keep all enemies from the gate. Spite of fenced cities and many thousands of Jewish spears and Benjamite bows, the Ethiopian army comes up against Jerusalem.

II. That in the path of moral and spiritual rectitude we are in the way of safety. Asa had no need to be alarmed. Had he wickedly departed from the Lord he might well have been in the greatest consternation, for then the severe warnings of sacred Scripture would have been as a knell in his ears; but as it was, his fidelity to Jehovah was an assurance of safety. He was God's servant; he was in a position to "cry unto the Lord *his* God" (ver. 11); to say, "O Lord *our* God;" to claim that the Ethiopian's triumph would be a prevailing against the Lord himself: "Let not man prevail against *thee*." The king could hide in the cleft of the rock; he could fall back on almighty power; he was safe before a blow was struck. He did the right thing on the occasion. (1) He brought his army into the field, well equipped and well arrayed (ver. 10); and then (2) he made his earnest, believing appeal to the Lord his God. This is the path of safety, the place of wisdom. Let us, in days of peace and plenty, in the time of joy and honour, seek and serve the Lord our God, and then, when the darkness falls, when the enemy appears, when such power is needed as goes far beyond our small resources, we can turn with a holy confidence and with Christian calmness to the succour of the faithful and the mighty Friend. We shall indeed do as Asa did; we shall summon all our own powers and wisdom to confront the danger, to meet the difficulty; but, like the King of Judah, we shall feel that our true hope is in the living God, and we shall hide in him, our Refuge and our Strength. "In *his* Name" we shall "go against this multitude."

III. THAT AS THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR GOD WE HAVE A POWERFUL PLEA. As those who are enlisted and engaged in the great campaign against moral evil in this world, we have a strong plea to urge when we draw nigh to God in prayer and seek his conquering power. 1. God is *our* God; the God of our choice and of his own faithful Word. 2. God is able to give us the victory even against the greatest odds: "It is nothing with thee to help" (ver. 11). "If thou wilt, thou canst." "All things are possible" with him. 3. We do all that we do in his Name, for the extension of his kingdom.

> "The work is thine, not mine, O Lord,
> It is thy race we run."

"Let not *man* prevail against *thee*."

IV. THAT, GOD WITH US, ANXIOUS FEAR WILL CHANGE TO JOYOUS VICTORY. "The Lord smote the Ethiopians, . . . and Asa and the people pursued them," etc. (vers. 12—15). The king and the people of Judah went out of Jerusalem with the most grave concern in their hearts; they re-entered the royal city with their souls full of joy and their arms full of spoil. Their courage and, more especially, their fidelity were crowned with a true and a great success. So in due time will ours also. It is true that our fight with wrong and woe is not (like this one of Asa's) a short sharp battle; it is a long campaign; it is a campaign in which fortune wavers, or seems to waver, from side to side; in which many good soldiers of Christ are seen to fall. But there can be no doubt about the issue. The Lord is on our side. Victorious Love is our great Captain, and the time will come when we too shall "return to Jerusalem," with songs of joy and triumph on our lips.—C.

Vers. 1—8.—*Quiet in the land.* I. A GREAT BLESSING. 1. *Its character.* No war (ver. 6). Few, reflecting on the untold calamities of war, the expenditure of blood and treasure, the sorrow and desolation sent into many homes, the interruption of the arts of peace, the bad passions kindled by it in the breasts even of the victors, will doubt that peace is one of the foremost blessings a nation can enjoy. This was the condition of Judah during the first ten years of Asa's reign. Compare Shakespeare's description of "peace after a civil war" ('King Henry IV.,' Part I. act i. sc. 1). 2. *Its source.* Jehovah (ver. 7). "Every good and every perfect gift is from above" (Jas. i. 17)—true of national peace (Josh. xxi. 44; 1 Chron. xxii. 18) no less than of other things (Ps. xxix. 11; Isa. xlv. 7; Jer. xiv. 13; Hag. ii. 9). As no king or people can stir up war until God permits, so can none extinguish its flames without his help. But "when he giveth quietness, who can make trouble?" (Job xxxiv. 29). Hence national peace should be prayed for (Jer. xxix. 7; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2). 3. *Its medium.* Righteousness. The peace of Asa's opening years was due, not to Abijah's successful campaigns (ch. xiii. 15), though successful campaigns are of God's giving (Ps. cxliv. 1, 2, 10); or to his own skilful diplomacy, since skilful diplomacy is not always from above (2 Sam. xvi. 20, etc.); or to his fenced cities, which would have been poor fortifications had they not been defended by Jehovah's battalions (Ps. cxxvii. 1); but to his and his people's following after that righteousness which is a nation's best defence (Prov. xiv. 34) and a sovereign's surest security (Prov. xvi. 12). Asa and his people sought the Lord their God, and he gave them "rest on every side." The annals of Israel show that peace ever went hand-in-hand with piety, and war with disobedience (Ps. lxxxi. 11—16; Isa. lxviii. 18, 19). Always when the people chose new gods there was war in the gates (Judg. v. 8). When they forsook God, he forsook them, with the result that "there was no peace to him that went out or to him that came in" (ch. xv. 5). So, in modern times, the military spirit exists in Christian men and nations in proportion as they depart from the religion of Jesus. If at any time "Christianity, socially regarded, does almost nothing to control the state of expectant war and the jealousies of nations," that is not because Christianity is a "failure," and "criminally complacent to these (and other) evils," or "because the religion of heaven and supernatural visions" is "powerless to control this earth and its natural realities" (Harrison's 'New Year's Address to English Positivists,' 1889), but because its professed disciples do not honestly obey its precepts (John xiii. 34; Rom. xiii. 8; Gal. v. 13; Eph. v. 2) and carry out its principles (Matt. vii. 12; Rom. xiii. 10; Jas. ii. 8). The reign of Christianity in any nation would put an end to civil feuds and wars of aggression. With the extinction of these, wars of defence would cease.

II. A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY. 1. *For the furtherance of true religion.* Besides setting an example of personal religion—the most effective way in which kings can promote national religion—Asa laboured with promptitude, decision, and assiduity in the work of abolishing the prevalent idolatry. (1) He demolished the "strange altars," *i.e.* altars to foreign divinities which had been erected by his predecessors, Solomon and Rehoboam, and left standing by his father Abijah. (2) He removed the "high places" dedicated to idolatrous worship, though he allowed those which had been consecrated to Jehovah to remain (ch. xv. 17; 1 Kings xv. 14). (3) He brake down the "pillars," obelisks or monumental columns dedicated to Baal (2 Kings iii. 2; x. 26), resembling that erected by Jacob at Bethel (Gen. xxxv. 14), and perhaps also those set up by Moses at Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 4) in honour of Jehovah. (4) The *Asherim*, wooden idols or tree trunks, consecrated to Astarte (see Keil on 1 Kings xiv. 23), he hewed down. (5) From all the cities of Judah he removed the high places and the sun-images, *i.e.* pillars or statues consecrated to Baal as the sun-god, and erected near or upon the altars of Baal (ch. xxxiv. 4). So Christian kings and statesmen should labour at the destruction of all false forms of religion within their domains; not, however, by forcible suppression, which, though permitted and even demanded of Asa, is not allowed to sovereigns or, indeed, to any under the gospel, but by fostering in all legitimate ways what they believe to be the absolute and only true religion. 2. *For promulgating useful laws.* When nations are distracted by internecine feuds within themselves or between each other, it is hopeless to expect the work of good legislation to proceed. Hence the value of a "long peace" to any country, permitting, as it does, the cultivation of the peaceful arts, the development of trade and commerce, the spread of learning and culture, the growth of domestic institutions, and the promotion of measures for the welfare of the state. Asa, in the ten years of rest, "commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the Law and the commandment" (ver. 4); and though under the New Testament dispensation it is not required of kings to command their subjects to worship and obey God—that being an obligation already laid on men by the gospel—and far less to punish them should they disobey, it is, nevertheless, allowed kings to follow in Asa's footsteps so far as to utilize the years of rest their countries may enjoy in legislating for the comfort and happiness of their subjects. 3. *For securing the safety of the realm.* Asa did so by (1) erecting military fortresses, "fenced cities" in the land of Judah, surrounding them with walls and towers, and securing them with gates and bolts; and (2) by collecting around him a well-equipped army—from Judah 300,000 targeteers and spearmen, with heavy shields and lances (1 Chron. xii. 24); and from Benjamin 280,000, bearing light shields and furnished with bows (1 Chron. viii. 40). So should Christian states employ times of peace in constructing such bulwarks as their lands require, whether in the shape of garrison cities, regiments of soldiers, or fleets of war-vessels, since self-preservation is an instinct of nature as much for nations as for individuals, and is not forbidden to either by the gospel, while to be prepared for war is sometimes an effective means of securing peace (Luke xi. 21).

LESSON. The duty of individuals and nations to shun war and follow peace.—W.

Vers. 9—15.—*An alarming invasion.* I. THE INVADER AND HIS ARMY. (Ver. 9.) 1. *The invader.* Zerah, the Ethiopian (or Cushite), commonly identified with Osorkhon (Usarkon) I. king of Egypt, the second sovereign of the twenty-second or Bubastis dynasty (Rosellini, Wilkinson, Champollion, Lepsius, Rawlinson, Ebers); but, inasmuch as no Ethiopian appears among the monumental kings of this dynasty, a claim to be regarded as the Zerah of Scripture has been advanced in behalf of Azerchamen, an Ethiopian conqueror of Egypt (Schrader, Brugsch), who, in the reign of Osorkhon, overran the entire dominion of the Pharaohs, and, though unable at that time to retain his hold, nevertheless paved the way for the subsequent conquest of the country by Pianchi, of the twenty-fifth or Ethiopian dynasty. If, however, the former identification be provisionally accepted, Zerah's designation as "the Cushite" may be explained by supposing that his mother was an Ethiopian (Rawlinson), or that he bore the title "king's son of Cush" as crown prince of Egypt and viceroy of the south or Ethiopia (Ebers). 2. *His army*—1,000,000 men—900,000 infantry, with 100,000 cavalry (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 12. 1), and 300 chariots. This immense host of Ethiopians and Libyans (ch. xvi. 8), only 100,000 fewer than all the fighting men of Israel, and more than twice as many as the warriors of Judah in the time of David (1 Chron. xxi. 5), so far outnumbers the army of Shishak (ch. xii. 3), that it has been set down to popular exaggeration in making a rough estimate (Keil), or to legendary embellishment (Ebers), suggested by the vast armies of the Persians, with which the Chronicler was familiar (Ewald). The largest army of invasion of which history speaks was probably that of Xerxes, which, when numbered on the Doriscan plain, amounted to nearly two millions and a half of fighting men, military and naval (Herod., vii. 60, etc.; Smith's 'History of Greece,' p. 189). Recent calculations show that "the total strength of the German army on a war footing is now rather over three millions and a half of men" (*Scottish Leader*, January 1, 1889). 3. *His camp.* At Mareshah, or Marissa, one of Rehoboam's garrison cities, between Hebron and Ashdod (ch. xi. 8, which see).

II. THE MONARCH AND THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH. (Vers. 10, 11.) 1. *A display of splendid courage.* "Asa went out against him." On either hypothesis as to Zerah's person, it was an exhibition of noble daring on the part of the King of Judah to confront him, much more to stand up against a million of highly disciplined troops, with only little more than half that number of spearmen and archers (ver. 8). As an instance of heroic fortitude, it was worthy to be placed alongside of the most brilliant feats of valour recorded in either sacred or profane history, as *e.g.* the pursuit of the victorious kings by Abraham (Gen. xiv. 14—16), the discomfiture of the Midianites by Gideon with 300 men (Judg. vii. 21), the invasion of the Philistines' garrison at Michmash by Jonathan and his armour-bearer (1 Sam. xiv. 13—16), the combat of David with Goliath (1 Sam. xvii. 49, 50), the defeat of the Persians under Darius at Marathon by Miltiades, with a small body of Athenians and Platæans (B.C. 490), and under Xerxes at Thermopylæ, by Leonidas and 300 Spartans (B.C. 480), the victory of Bruce with 30,000 Scotch over Edward II. with 100,000 English (A.D. 1314), of the Black Prince over an army seven times as large as his own at Poictiers (A.D. 1356), of Clive with 3000 men over 50,000 led by the Nabob of Moorshedabad at Plassey (A.D. 1757). 2. *An example of commendable prudence.* Asa selected, as the spot on which to join issue with the enemy, the valley of Zephathah, near Mareshah, probably because there the advantage to be derived from superior numbers would less operate. He also disposed his troops in such a fashion as to enable them most efficiently to resist the onset of the foe. In so doing, he only discovered his sagacity and sense both as a general and a man. He knew that, while it was hopeless to expect victory without God's help, it was folly to cry for Divine assistance while neglecting to put his battalions in order. So in ordinary matters and in matters of religion. Prayer cannot supersede the use of common means. 3. *A pattern of lofty faith.* Having marshalled his forces, Asa prayed—prayed upon the battle-field, as Moses did on the Red Sea shore when pursued by the Philistines (Exod. xiv. 10), as Jehoshaphat did when invaded by the Ammonites and Moabites (ch. xx. 18), as Cromwell and his Ironsides, Gustavus Adolphus and his Swedes, Colonel Gardiner and his Scotch dragoons, and other God-fearing generals with their regiments have been accustomed to do before entering into engagements with their enemies. Asa's prayer was remarkable for two things. (1) For the brevity and directness of its petitions. Necessitated in his case by the situation, these qualities are excellent in all petitioners (Matt. vi. 7). Asa asked the help of Jehovah against his foes, as David before him had often done (Ps. lix. 4; lxxi. 12; xxxv. 2), and as Christians may still do (Heb. iv. 16), especially against such foes as are spiritual and threaten the destruction of their souls (Ps. lxxi. 12; Isa. xlix. 8; Hos. xiii. 9; Mark ix. 22, 24; Acts xxvi. 22). (2) For the excellence and strength of its arguments. God invites those who address him in prayer to fill their mouths with arguments (Job xxiii. 4), to bring forth their strong reasons (Isa. xli. 21), and to plead with him (Isa. xliii. 26). Asa urged: (*a*) Jehovah's covenant relation to him and his people. Jehovah was his God and their God (ver. 11)—a good argument for a Christian suppliant. (*b*) The multitude of the foe arranged against them. David derived a plea from the number of his adversaries (Ps. xxv. 19; lvi. 2), and so may David's brethren

(Eph. vi. 18). Compare the English king's prayer at Agincourt, "O God of battles," etc. ('Henry V.,' act iv. sc. 1). (*c*) The fact that the war was Jehovah's even more than theirs (ch. xx. 15). They were going out against Zerah in his Name, as in his Name David had advanced to meet Goliath (1 Sam. xvii. 45). In this Name all Christian warfare should be carried on (Ps. xx. 5; Acts iv. 30; xvi. 18; Col. iii. 17); when it is, a claim is thereby established upon God to uphold the honour of his Name (Ps. lxxi. 9; John xii. 28). (*d*) The circumstance that he alone was able to assist them in the tremendous crisis that had come upon them. "There is none beside thee to help, between the mighty and him that hath no strength" (Revised Version); or, "There is no difference with thee to help, whether the mighty or him that hath no strength" (margin); or, "It is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power" (Authorized Version). Whichever reading be adopted—though the first is the best—the sentiment was that Jehovah alone could assist in so unequal a combat, and that he could do so if he would, since it was not necessary for him to be "on the side of the strongest battalions" (Napoleon). He could win battles, as Jonathan long before observed, whether by many or by few (1 Sam. xiv. 6). Much more is God the only Refuge to which the Christian can turn in carrying on the unequal contest to which he is called against the principalities and powers of darkness; and to his power nothing is impossible (ch. xx. 6; Matt. xix. 26; Mark xiv. 36; Eph. iii. 20; 1 Pet. i. 5). (*e*) The dishonour Jehovah himself would sustain through their defeat. The invasion of Zerah was practically a campaign against Jehovah. To suffer them to be overthrown would be (seemingly at least) permitting himself to be overcome by a weak mortal. Happily, God condescends to allow this in matters of grace, as in the case of Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 29; Hos. xii. 4), but not in ordinary affairs when the interest of his kingdom would be thereby injured (Rom. viii. 28; Eph. i. 11). Asa's argument was good. Compare the boldness of Moses in pleading with God in behalf of Israel (Numb. xiv. 16). (3) The fact that they were deliberately trusting in God. "Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee." God has pledged himself never to disappoint those who trust in him (Ps. xxxiv. 22; xxxvii. 40; Isa. xlv. 17).

III. JEHOVAH AND THE COMBATANTS. (Vers. 12—15.) 1. *The Ethiopians were routed.* (1) They were defeated on the field of battle. Jehovah "smote" them before Asa and Judah (ver. 12). (2) They were put to flight by the archers and spearmen that opposed them. The Ethiopians "fled." (3) They were pursued as far as Gerar, a chief city of the Philistines, now identified as the Khirbet-el-Gerar, in the Wâdy Jorf-el-Gerar, three leagues south-east of Gaza (Rowland). (4) They were massacred by the victorious monarch and his exulting warriors. They were "destroyed before the Lord and before his host," for the understanding of which there is no need to call in the help of a battalion of angels, as in Gen. xxxii. 2. Asa's army was Jehovah's host, because Jehovah was with it and in it; and the blood of Asa's enemies was poured out before Jehovah, because the battle had been undertaken in his Name and the victory achieved through his power. (5) They were so completely crushed that they could not recover themselves. They disappeared from Palestine, and ceased from troubling Judah. Such will be the end of the enemies of the Church of God (1 Sam. ii. 9; 2 Thess. i. 9). 2. *The men of Judah were victorious.* (1) The monarch's prayer was answered. So did God hear the prayer of Moses when he cried for help against the Egyptians (Exod. xiv. 15), and that of the Israelites when they appealed for assistance against their foes (Judg. x. 11), and that of the Reubenites when they entreated succour against the Hagarites (1 Chron. v. 20), and that of Hezekiah when he appealed to the Lord God of Israel against Sennacherib (1 Kings xix. 15, etc.). So God hears the prayer of the Church's King (John xi. 41, 42), and of the soldiers of the cross (Ps. lxv. 2; Eph. iii. 20; 1 John iv. 6). (2) The soldiers' courage was rewarded. They inflicted a decisive blow upon the enemy; they smote all the cities round about Gerar, these having probably espoused the cause of the enemy; they carried away much spoil, not only of ammunitions of war and provisions which had been laid up in those cities, but also of cattle and sheep and camels, which they had found in abundance, and which, in all likelihood, had belonged to the enemy. So did Christ, the Captain of salvation, achieve a brilliant triumph over the principalities and powers of darkness, despoiling them of victory, and making a show of them openly (Col. ii. 15); and so will Christ's followers be made more than conquerors over the same foes (Rom. viii. 37), and carry off from the fields of conflict where they meet their enemies much spiritual treasure (Rom. viii. 28).

LESSONS. 1. The sinfulness of wars of aggression, and the lawfulness of wars of defence. 2. The duty of combining working with praying, as well as praying with working. 3. The impossibility of achieving victory either without or against God, or of suffering defeat with God upon one's side.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter is something like an oasis in our history, and was perhaps such in the real life of Asa also. Presumably it covers a period of some twenty years. Reading between the lines, and indeed chapters, we may very well suppose that the mission of "Azariah son of Oded" to Asa now was one of all mercy. Great salvation had been shown to him and his people, and as time went on they might forget the Saviour, and imagine the work was all their own. Moreover, their own proper work had tarried, and beside caution and humility (in season for him as a returning conqueror-king, ver. 2), Asa needed stimulus; perhaps the Lord's loving-kindness knew that he needed every kindly encouragement. For there are not wanting signs that he was before his people, and felt the drag of them upon him as Moses himself did. These are the features of the physical geography, so to say, of the chapter, which comprises the rousing warning of Azariah the prophet (vers. 1—7); Asa's renewal of the altar in its own structure, and in worthy sacrifices upon it (vers. 8—11); his and his people's hearty reconsecration of themselves (vers. 12—15); and his own personal, practical carrying out of reform, though his people apparently did not keep pace with him (vers. 16—19).

Ver. 1.—The Spirit of God came. For "came," read the literal Hebrew "was," as also in our ch. xx. 14, where instead of "God" (אֱלֹהִים), we find "*the Lord*" (יְהוָֹה). In our ch. xxiv. 20, we have again "God," with the verb "clothed" (לָבְשָׁה). The grand original of the expression is, of course, found in Gen. i. 2, where the name is "God." Compare Pharaoh's question in Gen. xli. 38; Exod. xxxi. 3; xxxv. 31; Numb. xxiv. 2; Judg. iii. 1; vi. 34 (the verb "clothed" is used in this last); five other times in Judges we have "the Spirit of the Lord;" in Samuel six times, and "the Spirit of God" another six times; in Kings, three times "the Spirit of the Lord." These passages exhibit incontestably the function, and the manifold function, of the Spirit! **Azariah the son of Oded.** The Vulgate and Alexandrian Septuagint read here simply *Oded;* and Movers (p. 261) has suggested that "Oded the son of Azariah" is the correct reading for what now stands in the text; these are contrivances to meet the difficulty which the eighth verse occasions, and they are not so simple certainly as the proposal of Keil and Bertheau (following the Arabic Version) to omit altogether from ver. 8 the repetition of the name of the prophet, under the plea that the words, "of Oded the prophet," may so conceivably be owing to a copyist's meddlesome marginal reminiscence of ver. 1. It would have been, perhaps, a yet simpler method of overcoming the difficulty to account that the words, "Azariah the son of," had through a copy error slipped out of the text, except that the previous word, "the prophecy," is *not* in the *construct* state, and this favours Keil and Bertheau's suggestion (see our ch. ix. 29), or rather the suggestion of the Arabic Version, which before them omits the words, "of Oded the prophet." The Vatican Septuagint has the readings in both verses as Englished in the Authorized Version. Some think Oded may be one with Iddo of ch. ix. 29; xii. 15; xiii. 22; pointing out that the Hebrew characters would permit it, if we suppose a *vau* added to the name Oded. This conjectural attempt to give this Prophet Azariah for son to Iddo seems to gain no great point. Of this Azariah nothing else is known; he is described as "son of Oded" probably to distinguish him from Azariah the high priest, son of Johanan (see Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 142, second column, 3). (For the rest on this subject, see note on ver. 8.)

Ver. 2.—He went out to meet him; literally, *into his presence;* but the Authorized Version rendering is very correct, as well as happy in expression (see 1 Chron. xiv. 8; also see the remarkable and interesting verse, ch. xxviii. 9). The prophet was the leader, the teacher, the suggester of the right and opportune thing to the people, but to the prophet the Lord himself was Leader, Teacher, Prompter, and it was exactly so now. To the very moment, the quickened moment of new thought and for new deed, divinest instruction and suggestion are ministered. The Lord is with you . . . will forsake you. The original occasion of the beautiful language and word of covenant in the heart of this second part of the verse is enshrined in Deut. iv. 29 (see also 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; ch. xxiv. 20; Jer. xxix. 11—14). It is just conceivable that these words by themselves are what are designated "the prophecy" (*and* "the prophecy") in ver. 8. They may be in the first place regarded as ancient quotations. They are also characterized by a certain self-containedness and weightiness of matter as compared with the historic illustrations of the following four verses. No corroborative *external* evidence of this conjecture, however, is forthcoming.

Ver. 3.—Now for a long season. This translation is wrong; translate rather first, *And many the days to Israel to not have true God, and to not have teaching priest, and to not have Law.* So far no tense is limited, however naturally through the very drift of the passage it may seem that *experience* is being challenged, and so necessarily the past tense desiderated, not, however, in *aorist* shape, but in what some French grammarians call present perfect. For Azariah may well contemplate his illustration as good from long of old, to the very moment he was speaking. The unfortunate wealth of illustration to hand of his position may pardon the doubtfulness of commentators as to the source from which it may be supposed he would have drawn his most effective instances. It will not be the unlikeliest guide to follow the triple description of the alleged apostasy, misfortune, or iniquity "of Israel," *e.g.* (say) it *happened* to them to not have the true God; *happened* to them to not have teaching priest; *happened* to them to not have the Law (this meaning, to not have it authoritatively proclaimed, taught, ministered). When did these three things *happen* altogether most notoriously? They describe, not the transgressions of an individual king, but the state of the people and kingdom as a whole. If it were possible to conceive the description as a flagrant anachronism, a retrospective post-Captivity amplification, which the writer (in his glow of work and thought) was unconsciously and irresistibly betrayed into putting into the lips of the Prophet Azariah, all doubt would end; for the description would suit no state of things and no period better than that of the divided kingdoms, especially applying to the career of the separate kingdom of Israel. Our account, unfortunately, is unchecked just here by a parallel. It is, however, impossible to suppose this without any tittle of external authority for it, much less enough to proceed upon. Some so crave the illustration that they are prepared to suppose all the tenses of these verses present and future rather than past and "present perfect." But, in fact, no doubt the history of Israel since the death of Moses illustrated the language of Azariah *passim* to a degree beyond all "that is written" or that we know. And then we may certainly consider that the expression chosen, "many days" (which some translate "many a day," "many a time"), even the word "years" not being employed, leaves it open to us to go to short episodes of an irreligious and disastrous character in the history of Israel. Lastly, the long stretch of fully three hundred years, extending throughout the Book of Judges (its last five chapters in right order or wrong) into the opening seven chapters of 1 Samuel, provides one running comment, superabundant almost to repetitiousness, for the illustration of our vers. 3—7; in many cases absolutely *picking out* the very colours to match (*e.g.* Judg. v. 6; xx. 29, 31, compared with our ver. 5). To distinguish and separate the very numerous references that might be made is merely supererogatory, and spoils the unmatched mosaic work of the history (Judg. ii. 15, 18, 19; iii. 12—15; iv. 1—3; v. 6, 19—21, 31; vi. 1—5, 7—10; ix. 32—37; x. 6—16; xi. 19, 20; xii. 5, 6; xvii. 5, 6, 13; xx. 29, 31; 1 Sam. ii. 30—35; iv. 9—22; vii. 3, 8; xiii. 19—22). It is a long-stretched-out history of a practically atheistic, priestless, lawless life; divided into narratives of invasion, oppression, servitude (sevenfold, the Mesopotamian, Moabite, Canaanitish, Midianitish, Ammonitish, Philistine, and, it may be added, in order to comprehend all internal strife, Ishmaelitish larger and lesser, yet surprisingly general), smart, cry for help manifestly more the cry of pain and cowardice than of penitence and repentance, resolution and vow, and—for another trial and still another—of Divine pity, forbearance, and deliverance!

Ver. 6.—Among other patent instances, not the least remarkable are found in Judg. xx. 35—45; ix. 44—47; these forecast and heralded that final rupture of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, which showed the "house divided against itself," and the sure consequences thereof.

Ver. 7.—Work . . . rewarded (so Jer. xxxi. 16; Eccles. iv. 9; Prov. xi. 18; and compare with them the crown of all the rest, Gen. xv. 1).

Ver. 8.—These words and the prophecy. In addition to what is said under ver. 1 on the question of the occurrence here of the name Oded, where we should have looked for the name *Azariah*, it may be noted that it is open to possibility that "these words" certainly referring to the language of Azariah, the "prophecy" may have in view some quotation more or less well known from Oded, satisfied by the latter part of ver. 2 or by ver. 7. This is not very likely; still, the conjunction "and" would thereby better account for itself. Nevertheless, it would still remain that the word "prophecy" is not in *construct* but absolute state, and we cannot count the difficulty removed, comparatively unimportant as it may be. **He took courage, and put away, etc.** These words may express either Asa's accomplishing of the reforms spoken of in the former chapter (vers. 3—5), or quite as probably his perseverance and renewed diligence and vigour in the same; the language, "he took courage," favours this latter view. **The cities which he had taken from, etc.** Some say that the reference here and in ch. xvii. 2 also must be understood to be to *Abijah's* victory and spoils (ch. xiii. 19), and that these two places must accordingly be in slight error. If this passage had stood alone, this view might have been more easy to accept, but the words in ch. xvii. 2 explicitly state that Asa *had* taken such cities, and the mere fact that the history does not record *when*, nor even show any very convenient gap into which Asa's taking of such cities after conflict with Israel might well fit in, can scarcely be allowed to override the direct assertion of ch. xvii. 2 (comp. ch. xvi. 11). At the same time, the work that would devolve on Asa in *holding* the cities his father Abijah had first taken, may easily account for all, and have been accounted Asa's taking, in the sense of *taking to* them, or retaking them. **Renewed the altar.** The altar, the place of which was before the porch, was the altar of burnt offering. The Hebrew for "renewed" is חִדֵּשׁ. The Vulgate translates insufficiently *dedicavit.* Bertheau thinks the renewal designs simply the purification of it from idolatrous defilements, although he admits that this is to *assume* that it had been defiled by idolatrous priests. Keil says the altar might well need genuine repair after the lapse of sixty years from the building of the temple. Of the nine occurrences of the word, five are metaphorical (as *e.g.* Ps. li. 10), but of the remaining four distinctly literal uses, including the present, three must mean just strictly "repair" (ch. xxiv. 4, 12; Isa. lxi. 4), and the probability may therefore be that such is the meaning now. Many, however, prefer the other view. The work of Asa, as described in ch. xiv. 3—5, was one of taking away, breaking down, and cutting down; but this item shows it now, in his fifteenth year, become also one of renewing and repairing. *The porch of* (so ch. xxix. 17; 1 Kings vii. 6, 7, 12; Ezek. xl. 7); אֻלָם, though in *construct* state, the *kamets* impure.

Ver. 9.—**He gathered.** As the following verses go on to show, Asa wisely gathered all beneath his sway, with a view to sacrifice and to record anew hallowed resolve as a nation. **The strangers.** It is a significant comment on the estranging effect of religious schism (for the schism was religious even beyond what it was *national*) that so comparatively soon these of the tribes of Israel should have become called "strangers" by the side of Judah and Benjamin. **They fell to him . . . in abundance.** Another significant comment on the sameness of human nature in all time; the weak and the multitude will see, learn, do duty, less under pure conviction of right, than under the strong commanding influence of observation of where and with whom success goes, even if that success necessitate the owning of the Divine blessing as its cause (ch. xi. 16 and 1 Chron. xii. 19). It should be noted, not for the sake of satire of human nature, but for the inculcation of the infinite importance of godly influence and example. **Out of Simeon** (see also ch. xxxiv. 6). The "lines" of the Simeonites fell to them originally (Josh. xix. 1) within Judah. The difficulty suggested by their being called, apparently, "strangers," and being certainly classed with the comers from "Ephraim and Manasseh," may be variously overcome, either by supposing that they had become more estranged from Judah in religious position than it was possible to them to have become in merely geographical; or that they had in some degree outgrown their own proper *habitat*, and had to some extent colonized a more northerly region (Gen. xlix. 7); or that, though, indeed, our compiler's composition undoubtedly places the Simeonites summoned, among *the strangers*, through mentioning them after Ephraim and Manasseh, yet this location of their name be held accidental, rather than due to special design.

Ver. 10.—**In the third month.** The "Feast of Weeks" began about the sixth of this third month Sivan (June). **In the fifteenth year.** It has been conjectured from ch. xiv. 1 that Zerah the Ethiopian, or Cushite, invaded Judah in Asa's *eleventh* year. The present sacrificial festival, in his fifteenth year, evidently was held very shortly after the close of Asa's victory over Zerah. This infers a rather longer duration of the war than is otherwise to be gathered from the face of the history. The interval, it is true, may be explained by supposing that Asa lingered long to restore the state of things where Zerah's vast host had unsettled it.

Ver. 11.—These offerings were probably chiefly of the nature of peace offerings (Lev. vii. 11—21). In the mention of the "spoil" (ch. xiv. 13, 15) nothing is said of oxen. **Seven hundred . . . seven thousand.** The number *seven* is common when the sacrifices were in units (as *e.g.* Numb. xxix. 32; 1

Chron. xv. 26, etc.), but uncommon in hundreds and thousands, for see 1 Kings viii. 63; ch. xxxv. 7—9, comparing, however, ch. xxx. 24.

Ver. 12.—They entered into a covenant. For the original, see Exod. xxiv. 6—8; Deut. iv. 29; for two other solemn renewals of it, see 2 Kings xxiii. 1—3; ch. xxxiv. 29—33; where, however, the stringent engagement of the following verse, though sufficiently to be inferred, is not notified. **To seek;** Hebrew, לִדְרוֹשׁ (for similar use of לְ, with infinitive after, etc., see Neh. x. 30; Jer. xxxiv. 10).

Ver. 13.—Whosoever would not . . . should be put to death (see Exod. xxii. 20; Deut. xiii. 9; xvii. 2—6).

Ver. 14.—The loud voice, the shouting, and the trumpets, and cornets, spoke alike the determination, and the united joyful determination of the people (ch. xxiii. 13; Neh. xii. 27, 42, 43).

Ver. 15.—For the probable duration of **the rest round about,** spoken of in the last clause, see under ver. 19.

Ver. 16.—Maachah the mother of Asa; *i.e.* the grandmother (ch. xi. 20—22; xiii. 2; 1 Kings xv. 2, 10, 13) of Asa; and the statement amounts to this, that Asa removed her from the dignity she had enjoyed, with all its influences of "queen-mother." **An idol in a grove.** This, probably, literally translated, says, *an hideous fright for*, i.e. *in place of Asherah*, i.e. Ashtoreth, or Astarte; but some translate *to* Asherah. The word we translate "an hideous fright" (מִפְלֶצֶת) occurs only here and in the parallel (1 Kings xv. 13), and its derivation root guides to this rendering; but some give it the idea of an object of reverent fear among idols. **Asa cut down.** So it was enjoined (Exod. xxxiv. 13—15). **And stamped it;** Hebrew, וַיָּדֶק; hiph. of דָּקַק; the meaning being "stamped it" in the dust, from its upright position, finally burning it. The word is used in ch. xxxiv. 4, 7; 2 Kings xxiii. 6, 15; Exod. xxx. 36; Micah iv. 13. The word used in the parallel is "cut off," or "cut down," of course also preparatory to burning. **At the brook Kidron.** The Kidron was a torrent rather than a *brook*. It flowed between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, and finally emptied itself into the Dead Sea. The references to Kidron in the Old Testament are interesting, but all reinvested with heightened interest from those in the New Testament (John xviii. 1, compared with what the parallels infer; Mark xiv. 26; Luke xxii. 39). The first two references in the Old Testament are 2 Sam. xv. 23; 1 Kings ii. 37. Passing these, the present place, with its parallel, brings the Kidron valley next under notice as the place of destruction for Maachah's obscene phallic abomination, and then (2 Kings xi. 16) as the place where Athaliah was destroyed. Its associations are similar when spoken of in 2 Kings xiii. 4, 6, 12; ch. xxix. 16; xxx. 14, becoming the "regular receptacle for the impurities and abominations of the idol-worship, when removed from the temple and destroyed by the adherents of Jehovah." In the time of Josiah, this valley was the common burying-place of the city (2 Kings xxiii. 6; Jer. xxvi. 23; xxxi. 40). (For Robinson's description of the modern state of the Kidron valley, see Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' ii. 14—16).

Ver. 17.—The high places were not taken away out of Israel. It is possible, but scarcely tenable, that, by Israel, the northern kingdom may be here intended. But for the apparent discrepancy with those places which say that Asa *did* take away "the high places" (ch. xiv. 3, 5), see notes under them, and § 7. 1, pp. xvi., xvii., of 'Introduction to 1 Chronicles.' "The high places" were hills on which sacrifices were illegitimately offered instead of at the chosen place—at Jerusalem. **The heart of Asa was perfect all his days.** The words, "with Jehovah," following after the word "perfect" in the parallel (1 Kings xv. 17), makes the already plain plainer. The exact meaning is that Asa was consistently free from idolatry to the end.

Ver. 18.—Except for an unimportant difference of the Keri and Chethiv kind in one word, this verse is identical with the parallel (1 Kings xv. 15). **The silver, gold, and vessels** were, of course, for the repair, restoration, and replacing of the revered fittings and ornaments of the temple. From what sources and after what victories the father of Asa and Asa himself had drawn these supplies is not given either here or in the parallel, but it is natural to suppose that Abijah's victory over Jeroboam (ch. xiii. 16) and Asa's over Zerah would have been the chief occasions to furnish them.

Ver. 19.—There was no more war. The Hebrew text should be adhered to, which simply says, *there was not war unto*, etc. **The five and thirtieth year.** There can be little doubt that the text originally said "twentieth," not "thirtieth" (see also ch. xvi. 1). The parallel, after the identical words of the previous verse already noted, goes on emphatically to speak of the fact that "there was war between Asa and Baasha all their days;" and the same statement is repeated in the thirty-second verse of the same chapter (1 Kings xv. 16, 32). The following verse (33) says that Baasha's twenty-four-year reign began in Asa's *third* year. Putting the various and apparently somewhat varying statements together, they must be held to say, *first*, that a state of war was, indeed, chronic between Asa and Baasha (which way of putting need not disturb the correctness of ch. xiv. 5, 6, and of the fifteenth verse of our chapter), but that in the six and twentieth year of Asa, which would be the last or last but one of Baasha's life, latent war gave place to active hostilities, and Baasha (ch. xvi. 1) came up to Judah to invade it, and to build Ramah—a course of conduct which was the beginning of the end for him (comp. 1 Kings xvi. 8; our ver. 19; and ch. xvi. 1, 9).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—19.—*The hour of happiness improved.* Perhaps we are not warranted to say that it was immediately after Asa's victory over Zerah, or able to say *how* soon it was after it, that Azariah the son of Oded came with his message to him and "all Judah and Benjamin," under that direct and ever-typical leading of "the Spirit." Nor does the parallel enlighten us on this point. The history, however, here follows on with the account of Azariah's appearance to Asa, and gives us the impression that it was at a certain favourable crisis, in happy quickened hours, due to the fresh memories of the divinely given victory, the manifest and most merciful interposition of Heaven, that the prophet came. Coming, he did thus the very thing the prophet is ever ordained to do. He breaks in on the lower life, on the life prone to forget, on the life able enough nevertheless to take higher ground and onward action, and reminds it, in plainest fidelity and undoubting firmness of speech, of such great realities as these.

I. ITS ABIDING PRIVILEGE—GOD'S DWELLING PRESENCE, HIS CONSTANTLY RESIDENT PRESENCE, HIS HABITUAL INDWELLING, ON THE ONE SUPPOSITION AND CONDITION OF HIS PEOPLE'S ALLEGIANCE. "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him." It is a simple, powerful, ever-necessary reminder for the earliest, opening intelligence of the baptized; for the unfolding, growing, intelligent piety of the confirmed; for the devoutness and all the trembling awe of the communicant; and for all the Church, individually or collectively, in the dangerous, doubtful, fickle, forgetful, tempted course of human life. *He* is faithful, *his mercies* fail not, *his memory* is ever fresh, punctual and to be relied upon, and—wonderful assurance to lay to heart—it is not *we* who have to wait for *him!*

II. ITS PERPETUAL OPPORTUNITY—THE OPPORTUNITY OF OBTAINING, SIMPLY FOR THE SEEKING, DIVINE INTERPOSITION. Life and human character need and have the special and occasional as well as the abiding and daily, the exceptional as well as the familiar, hill and valley as well as the level way, dark trial and deep grief as well as the wonted discipline of earth for imperfect creatures, joys as well as peace, and in a word abounding vouchsafements of grace and strength, as well as the unbroken stream of day after day.

III. ITS TREMBLING DANGER—THE DANGER OF BEING FORSAKEN OF ITS CHIEF GOOD, THROUGH FORSAKING ITS GOD. How lightly men treat the love which is most sensitive as well as most needed—liable to be grieved, offended, quenched, or absent none can tell how long, as none can tell where the sin and the folly that drove that love, shall cease to drive their victim! To be forsaken of God is absolutely the worst forsakenness, the dreariest solitariness, the poorest poverty. And the sentence, "Let him alone," or "Let them alone," how its echoes wander and trail—sometimes endlessly!

IV. ITS SUPREME EXERTION OF ENERGY. There are times, and there are enterprises, where no outer energy, no inner devotion, can be misplaced. Resolution, courage, and covenant, mutual exhortation, meeting together, edifying one another, and "the speaking oft to one another" on the part of them "that fear the Lord," vowing to the Lord and praying to him, and praising him with singing and music, and "with all the heart, and all the desire," "putting away the idols, stamping them to dust, and burning them," "renewing the altar and renewing ever the sacrifices thereof,"—this enthusiasm *becomes* certain occasions and spreads a holy contagion. The life that is devoid of it has missed its way and its joy on earth even; the lives that are destitute of it have doomed themselves. Other associations, other bonds, other enterprises, may make them sport, but can scarcely fail in the very act to make them *their* sport! Now, Asa and his people had found and were following the better way; and oh that such a heart may continue in them! Grateful, happy, and inspirited hours of life were used by the prophet and the king and his people for thinking greater things, resolving on greater things, and carrying them into execution. They should be similarly utilized by us. In hours uplifted by genuine healthful happiness, in periods of higher feeling and tone of thought, we should gladly seize the opportunity to *raise the standard* of our own conduct, and then *fix the standard* to which to work, and from which, even in lower mood, we shall, of God's help, not depart.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God's presence and departure.* It is characteristic of the Hebrew prophet that as the king comes back flushed with victory he meets the conqueror, not with honied words of congratulation, but with faithful words of admonition. What he says to the king may be taken as applicable to the servant of God generally.

I. A PROPHETIC CONFIRMATION OF THE GOOD MAN'S EXPERIENCE. "Jahve was with you (has given you the victory) because ye were with him (held to him)" (Keil). So far fidelity to Jehovah had proved to be the condition of prosperity. Under his banner they had marched to victory; while they were true to him, he had been in the midst of them, and had been there to bless them. This is the common, indeed the constant, experience of the good. The service of God is always a success. It means rest of soul at all times; it means calmness and a wise joy in prosperity; it means resignation and comfort in the time of trouble; it means strength for duty and courage for temptation; it means excellency in life and hope in death. To be with God in the sense and spirit of self-surrender to his will is to have his gracious presence with us, shedding light and gladness on our path. This is the testimony of the good.

II. A PROPHETIC PROMISE OF THE GOOD MAN'S HERITAGE. "If ye seek him, he will be found of you." Behind us is a part (larger or smaller) of our life, and we thank God for all that he has been to us as we have held on our way. But before us is another portion; it may be a very serious, it may be even a critical, passage of our life. We shall want not only our own resources at their best, and the kindest and wisest succour of our friends, but the near presence and effective aid of our heavenly Father. We shall want his *guidance*, that we may know the path we should take; his *guardianship*, that we may be preserved from the wrong-doings, from the errors and mistakes, into which we shall otherwise be betrayed; his *illumination*, that we may rightly discharge our duties and rise to the height of our opportunities; his *sustaining grace*, that we may bear ourselves bravely and meekly in the day of our adversity and defeat. All this we shall have *if we seek it truly*. And that means if we seek it (1) in moral and spiritual integrity, our heart being set on the service of Christ; (2) with our whole heart, earnestly and perseveringly; (3) believingly, building our hope on his Word.

III. A PROPHETIC WARNING OF THE GOOD MAN'S DANGER. "If ye forsake him, he will forsake you." 1. There is a practical danger of spiritual and, therefore, of moral declension. Such is our nature, that we are apt to let love become cold; to allow zeal to wane and wither; to permit our best habits to be encroached upon by the pressure of lower cares and pleasures; to forsake God. The records of Christian experience contain only too many instances of such departure. 2. We have, then, to fear the withdrawal of God from us; the loss of his Divine favour, of his indwelling Spirit, of his benediction and reward. 3. Therefore let us watch and pray, that we enter not into the *outer* shadow of condemnation.—C.

Ver. 7.—*Spiritual strength a sacred obligation.* "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak." This is in the imperative mood; it is a commandment. Strength is represented as a sacred duty; and weakness, consequently, as a culpable failure. To be spiritually strong *is* an obligation as much as an endowment. It may, indeed, be urged that there is—

I. CONSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS, which is to be borne with rather than to be blamed. Some human spirits are less fully endowed than others; some bring with them sad consequences of their progenitors' sin (Exod. xx. 5). It requires tenfold more spiritual courage and exertion on the part of these to be loyal and faithful than on the part of their brethren who are more richly equipped or less heavily weighted. We need to know much before we judge men. Only the Divine Father, who knows us altogether, who knows, therefore, the limitations and the propensities of our nature which we have received from himself or from our ancestors, can say how much we are to be blamed, how much to be pitied. But undoubtedly there is—

II. MORAL WEAKNESS, for which we are responsible, of which we are guilty. "Let not your hands be weak." But how often the hand is weak because the life has been low, and because the heart has been wrong! All *vice* leads down to weakness. And not vice alone, but all *folly*; the foolish and blameworthy disregard of the laws of our mind and of our body. Not only excessive indulgence in any one direction (mental or physical), but unregulated and ill-proportioned activity, ends in weakness; so that he who might have been an active and efficient workman in many a good field of usefulness is helpless; his hand hangs down; there is "no strength in his right hand," because there has been no wisdom in his mind.

III. SPIRITUAL STRENGTH, which we are under obligation to acquire. There is much of real, effective strength which it is open to us all to obtain if we will. God is saying to us, "Be ye strong;" and if we do what he gives us the means of doing, we *shall* be strong. What are the sources of spiritual strength? 1. *Christian morality.* And this includes (1) the care of the body—the regulation of its instincts and cravings, ministering to its necessities; (2) the culture of the mind—increasing its knowledge and nourishing its power; (3) the training of the heart. 2. *Sacred service.* Our capacity for serving Christ and man depends very largely indeed on our making a continuous effort to serve. "To him that hath is given," *i.e* to him that puts out his talent is given another; to him that expends his strength in paths of holy usefulness is given multiplied power to speak and strike for God and truth. Our present strength depends upon *our growth in power*; and that depends upon the measure of our exercise in the field of sacred work. 3. *Divine communication.* "Thou answeredst me and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul" (Ps. cxxxviii. 3); "In Christ who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).. Strength is one of the "good things" our heavenly Father will give to "them that ask him" (Matt. vii. 11).—C.

Ver. 7.—*The reward of Christian work.* "Your work shall be rewarded." The very words recur in the prophecies of Jeremiah (xxxi. 16); and the sentiment is frequently expressed by our Lord and by his apostles. It appears distinctly in the solemn statement of Jesus Christ, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father . . . and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27; see also Rom. ii. 6, 7; 1 Cor. iii. 8; Rev. xxii. 12). What is the reward for which we are to look? Not—

I. THE REWARD OF HIRED LABOUR. Hired labour is rewarded precisely and particularly. So much money for so much work, measured by the hours occupied or the work done. There is a nice calculation of what has been wrought on the one hand, and of what is given in exchange on the other. It is supposed that the one is the equivalent of the other. But our Divine Saviour does not call us into his field on this arrangement. We are not his day-labourers, engaged at a certain price; we are his fellow-workers—employed under him, indeed, but engaged with him in the completion of his great "work." He is not treating us as slaves or even as common servants, but as children and as friends—as those whom he loves and desires to bless with true well-being. We aspire to—

II. THE REWARD OF THE LABOUR OF LOVE. Our Divine Master invites us to stand by his side and work out with him the redemption of our race. He charges us to be as he was in the world; to work as he did, in the spirit of entire self-surrender, of whole-hearted love; to put forth our strength in his service and in the cause of righteousness and human elevation; and he tells us that we shall secure a "full reward." We shall find that in: 1. *The possession of his good pleasure.* The true soldier finds his best reward in the commendation of his commander; the true scholar in the approval of his teacher; the true workman in the smile of him in whose service he is engaged. We, as Christian workmen, look for our deepest joy in the smile and the approval of our Lord. We hope for no moment of keener ecstasy than that when we shall hear him say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" To live in the known and felt possession of Jesus Christ's benediction is one of the purest, as it is one of the most appreciated, rewards we can receive. 2. *The enlargement of our own powers of service.* As we work in the cause of heavenly wisdom and of spiritual well-being, our power for action is constantly enlarging, until feebleness becomes strength, and strength becomes might. The more we do the more we are capable of doing (see previous homily). 3. *The expansion of our sphere of service.* "Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. xxv. 21). "I will ask for no reward, except to serve thee still;" or, may we not say, "except to serve thee *more*"?—to serve thee in that broader sphere, with those nobler opportunities into which thou wilt introduce me. For our Master does thus enlarge us now, as one fruit of our labour; and he will soon reward us by a far more generous enlargement, when he "cometh with his Father" and when "his reward is with him."—C.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The secret of joy in the service of Christ.* How comes it to pass that the service of Christ should be associated in any mind with austerity and gloom? How is it that every one does not connect that service in his thought with gladness of heart and brightness of life? This misfortune may be attributable to misconception, to a mental error, to the misreading of some words of the Master or of his apostles; or it may be the consequence, physical as much as spiritual, of a particular temperament; but it is most frequently caused by lack of thoroughness in the service of the Lord.

I. THE MISTAKE OF HALF-HEARTEDNESS IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST. During the reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah, when king and people both showed much abatement of zeal in the worship of Jehovah, we do not read of any record like that of the text. Of Rehoboam we find that "he *fixed* not his heart to seek the Lord" (ch. xii. 14, marginal reading). Abijah could say nothing more for himself than that he had "not forsaken the Lord" (ch. xiii. 10), and his later days, like his grandfather's, were apparently darkened by indulgence. There was no fervour of piety, and there was no fulness of joy in the land. And we find that everywhere and always it is so. Half-heartedness in holy service is a profound mistake. It gives no satisfaction to our Lord himself. It leads to no height of Christian worth, to no marked excellency of character. It fills the soul with no deep and lasting joy. It is very likely to decline and to expire, to go out into the darkness of doubt, or worldliness, or guilt.

II. THE WISDOM OF WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS. "All Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire . . . and the Lord gave them rest." There was no imaginable step they could have taken which would have caused so much elation of heart and ensured so enviable a national position. Asa and his people showed the very truest wisdom, something more and better than sagacious policy or statecraft, when they sought the Lord with all their heart. They did that which gave them a pure and honest satisfaction in the present, and which, more than any other act, secured the future. And though we certainly are not invited to manifest the thoroughness of our devotion in the same severities that characterized their decision (ver. 13), we do well when we follow them in the fulness of their resolve. For to seek Christ the Lord with all our heart and our "whole desire" is the one right and the one wise thing to do. 1. It secures to us the abiding favour and friendship of the Eternal; he is then "found" of us. 2. It brings profound personal rest; then Christ speaks "peace" to us—*his* peace, such as this world has not at its command. 3. It secures a feeling of friendship toward all around us: "rest round about." The heart is filled with that holy love which desires to bless all who can be reached. 4. It fills and sometimes floods the heart with sacred joy. The full realization of the presence and love of Christ, the fervent worship of the Lord of all grace and truth, earnest work done in his Name and in his strength,—these are a source of enlarging and ennobling joy. The true key-note of the Christian life is this: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again . . . rejoice."—C.

Vers. 1—7.—*A conqueror's welcome.* I. A MESSAGE FROM GOD. (Vers. 1, 2.) 1. *Its bearer.* Azariah, "Whom Jehovah aids," the son of Oded; mentioned only here. Jehovah may, and often does, transmit messages of moment through humble and obscure messengers. What fitted Azariah to be the bearer of the Divine announcements was the coming upon him of the Spirit of Elohim, the Spirit being the Revealer and Interpreter of the Divine will to the soul of man (Numb. xi. 26; Job xxxii. 8; Ezek. ii. 2; 1 Cor. xii. 8). That the Spirit of God came upon a man did not prove him to have been a good man, Balaam (Numb. xxiv. 2) and Saul (1 Sam. x. 10) being witness; though there is no reason to doubt that Azariah was a true prophet of Jehovah. The Spirit came by measure upon him, as upon other holy men of the old dispensation through whom God spoke to his people; on Christ, through whom God's highest and last message has been sent to mankind, the Spirit was poured out without measure (Isa. xi. 2; John iii. 34; Rev. iii. 1). Hence the supreme importance attaching to the gospel. 2. *Its recipients.* "Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin." God claims a right to address sovereigns as well as their subjects. Between princes and peasants in his sight is no difference (Acts x. 34; 1 Pet. i. 17). God's messages in the Law and the gospel are directed equally to all. The monarch is as much under the Law as the subject; the subject has as valid a title to the provisions of the gospel as the monarch. Asa and his warriors were returning from a victorious campaign, when Jehovah's prophet interposed with notes of warning. These were timely, since the king and his veterans were in danger of self-laudation and self-confidence—of ascribing their recent splendid exploits to their own skill and prowess, and of trusting to their own valour to protect them in future, without troubling themselves to think about Jehovah, his religion, or his help. So men (not excepting Christians) are never more in peril of forgetting God than when fortune smiles upon them (Deut. viii. 13), and never more need to be admonished than when rejoicing in deliverances wrought for them by God. 3. *Its contents.* A doctrine, a promise, a warning. (1) The doctrine. That Jehovah was with them, while they were with him. With all God is as to his immanent presence, since he fills heaven and earth (Jer. xxxiii. 24), and besets all individually behind and before (Ps. cxxxix. 1—12); but with his people he is, in the special sense of gracious manifestation, to accept (Numb. xvii. 4), protect (ch. xx. 17; Jer. xlii. 11), assist (1 Chron. xxii. 18; Hag. i. 13), and bless (Exod. xx. 24). Only his presence with them is ever conditioned by their being with him in the sense of believing in, loving, and obeying him (John xiv. 23). (2) The promise. That if they sought Jehovah, Jehovah should be found of them. If they sought him in the way of penitence, faith, love, obedience, he should be found of them in the way of acceptance, grace, assistance. This promise, always true of Jehovah in his relations with Israel (1 Chron. xxviii. 9; ch. xxx. 19; Ps. cxix. 2; Jer. xxix. 13; Amos v. 4), is equally true of his relations with believers on Christ (Heb. xi. 6; Jas. iv. 8). (3) The warning. That if they forsook God, God would forsake them. If they went back from the path of reform upon which they were entered, he also would withdraw his countenance and aid from them. So Moses (Deut. xxxi. 16, 17) and Joshua (xxiv. 20) had warned their contemporaries and David his son Solomon (1 Chron. xxviii. 9). The same condition is addressed to all (Jer. xvii. 33; Heb. x. 38).

II. A LESSON FROM HISTORY. (Vers. 3—6.) 1. *The possibility of lapsing into religious apostasy.* Such times had formerly existed in Judah, and hence in the future might reappear (Eccles. i. 9; iii. 15). Whether Azariah's language depicted the condition of Judah then (Grotius), or in the future (Luther), or in the past, in the days of Rehoboam and Abijah (Syriac, Arabic), or in the period of the judges (Vitringa, Bertheau), is open to debate. As the prophet has not definitely stated the time, he may have designed to express truths of force at all times (Keil). Of such days as the prophet alludes to, Judah and Israel had both before had experience. The description of them is peculiarly affecting. (1) No true God; *i.e.* no knowledge of the true God; or, what is worse, the knowledge of the true God, but not his worship or service. Such times had existed soon after the death of Joshua (Judg. ii. 10—15; x. 6), and were yet to reappear in Israel under Ahab (1 Kings xviii. 20, 21), and in Judah under Ahaz (ch. xxviii. 1—6). "Without God"—a correct characterization of the unbelieving world (Job xxi. 14; Ps. x. 4; Eph. ii. 12). (2) No teaching priest; *i.e.* the priests they had either possessed no knowledge of the true God, of his character and requirements, and so could not teach the people; or, if they did, they were satisfied with the mere performance of their altar duties, without caring for the spiritual welfare of the people. If the first, they were disqualified for being priests by reason of their ignorance (Mal. ii. 7); if the second, they were chargeable with indolence (Mal. i. 6) or hypocrisy (Neh. ix. 34), or both. If, under the old covenant, priests were required to instruct the people in the tenets and precepts of religion, much more is it incumbent on Christian pastors to be also teachers (Eph. iv. 11). A ministry that does not preach or teach *ipso facto* stands condemned. (3) No Law; *i.e.* the Torah of Moses, unknown, or forgotten, or disobeyed. When men or nations depart from God, they begin by pulling down his altars, and end by trampling on his commandments. And if there be no God, this is just as it should be. If God is not, to pretend to worship him is a farce, and ministers of religion may be dispensed with; if God is not, there is no Supreme Authority to claim from man obedience, and man may at once assume lordship over himself. But if God is, it will be more prudent to let his altars remain, to see that his ministers teach, and take order that his precepts be obeyed. 2. *The certainty that religious apostasy will be followed by national disaster.* So it had been in the past, and so it would be in the future. (1) Social disturbance, danger, and violence had been, and would be, the order of the day. "And in those times there was," or is, "no peace to him that went out or to him that came in." Such had been Israel's condition in the days of Shamgar the son of Anath (Judg. v. 6), and under the oppression of the Midianites (Judg. vi. 2). Irreligion necessarily gravitates towards violence. He that breaks God's commandments without a qualm of conscience seldom scruples about making havoc with man's when opportunity occurs. Exemplified in the age of Noah (Gen. vi. 4, 11, 12), in the last days of Greece and Rome, and in the French Revolution of 1798. (2) Political anarchy had commonly attended these times in the past, and would more than likely do so again on their recurrence. "Great vexations came upon all the inhabitants of the countries, and nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city"—literally, "and they were broken in pieces, nation against nation and city against city;" "for God did," or does, "vex them with all adversity." The language, descriptive of such a reign of terror as commonly accompanies civil war, was verified in a form comparatively mild in the war of the tribes of Israel against Benjamin (Judg. xx. 20), and in the struggle of the Gileadites with Ephraim (Judg. xii. 4). Amos (iii. 9) depicted such commotions, confusions, tumults, as occurring, or about to occur, in Samaria in his time. In the final overthrow of the two kingdoms, the prophet's words received their most startling illustration (Isa. ix. 18—20). In the ultimate destruction of all peoples hostile to God, they will obtain their highest and fullest realization (Zech. xiv. 13; Matt. xxiv. 7). 3. *The only way of escaping from the miseries and horrors of such evil times, viz. by repenting and turning to Jehovah.* "But when in their distress," etc. So had it been in the days of the Egyptian oppression (Exod. ii. 23), and in those of the Midianite supremacy (Judg. vi. 6). So had it been in the experience of Asa himself, whose cry unto Jehovah on the field of war had been heard (ch. xiv. 11). So would it be again, if in the season of their calamity they remembered God (ch. vii. 14). The doctrine here enunciated holds good of individuals as well as of nations; *e.g.* David (2 Sam. xxi. 1; Ps. xviii. 6; xxxiv. 4; cxxxviii. 3), Jehoshaphat (ch. xvii. 4, 10), Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 5). The ear of God is open to every cry of a distressed soul (Ps. xxxiv. 15). "Fools, because of their transgression," etc. (Ps. cvii. 17—19).

III. AN EXHORTATION FROM A PROPHET. (Ver. 7.) 1. *The counsel.* Action. (1) Vigorous. "Be strong therefore." Courage in conceiving and doing the right thing was the special demand of the hour. The right thing at that moment in Judah was to adhere to Jehovah, reform the abuses that during the previous reigns had crept into his worship, and exterminate the idolatrous rites that had been introduced by earlier kings. More disastrous for the country had these been than Zerah's invasion. Nothing more required of the followers of God and soldiers of Jesus Christ in any age or land than an heroic determination to resist sin and follow holiness, oppose error and defend truth, renounce idolatry and cleave to the worship of the Father (Deut. xxxi. 6; Josh. i. 7; Ps. xxvii. 14; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 1). (2) Persevering. "Let not your hands be weak." Not enough to begin well; to continue well is indispensable. Weariness in well-doing a frequent phenomenon, much needing to be guarded against (Gal. vi. 9). Steadfastness in the faith and in the maintenance of good works expected of Christians (1 Cor. xv. 58; Phil. iv. 1; Col. i. 23; 2 Thess. iii. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 14; Heb. x. 23). 2. *The encouragement.* Recompense. "Your work shall be rewarded." (1) With inward satisfaction, as being in itself a right work (Prov. xiv. 14). This an invariable accompaniment of well-doing, and, apart from further consequences, ample remuneration. (2) With Divine approbation, as being a work God regards with favour.

Already expressed in the Word (Heb. xiii. 16), this will eventually be proclaimed by the mouth of God (Matt. xxv. 21, 23). (3) With ultimate success, as being a work destined to triumph over every form of evil. The cause of God and truth, of Christ and the gospel, may be long and bitterly opposed, but ultimate victory rests with it (Rev. xi. 15).

Learn: 1. The superiority of the new dispensation in having God's Son as its Messenger (Heb. i. 1, 2). 2. The equity of God's dealings with men in providence and in grace (1 Sam. ii. 30; Ezek. xviii. 29). 3. The miserable state of the heathen world, as destitute of the true knowledge of God (Eph. ii. 12; iv. 17, 18). 4. The value of affliction as a means of religious improvement (Job xxxiii. 17—19; Ezek. xx. 37; Lam. iii. 27; 2 Cor. iv. 17; Heb. xii. 11). 5. The secret of national prosperity—righteousness (Prov. xiv. 34). 6. The duty of persevering in religion (John xv. 4; Acts xi. 23; 2 Tim. i. 14; 1 Pet. v. 9; Rev. ii. 27). 7. The certainty that faith shall not lose its reward (Luke vi. 35; 1 Cor. iii. 14; Heb. x. 35).—W.

Vers. 8—19.—*Ancient covenanters.* I. SERIOUS PREPARATIONS. (Vers. 8—11.) 1. *The purgation of the land from idols.* Encouraged by the words of the son of Oded —not Oded, as in the text—Asa, on reaching his capital, determined to convene a national assembly, and enter into a solemn league and covenant to carry out the work of reformation so auspiciously begun (ch. xiv. 2—5), and so manifestly owned of Jehovah in the splendid victory he had granted over the Cushite invader (ch. xiv. 12). As a preliminary, he "put away the abominations," *i.e.* the idols, "from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities he had taken from the hill country of Ephraim." In the same spirit acted Jacob, before going up to meet with Jehovah at Bethel (Gen. xxxv. 2); and Moses, before the interview of Israel with Jehovah at Sinai (Exod. xix. 14); Hezekiah, before he celebrated the Passover (ch. xxx. 14); and Josiah, before he renewed the covenant (ch. xxxiv. 3—7). If such preparation on the part of Israel was needful to qualify her for an interview with Jehovah even in external celebrations (Amos iv. 12), much more is a similar preparation of the heart indispensable on the part of souls who come before God in any act of spiritual worship (ch. xix. 3; xx. 33; 1 Sam. vii. 3; Ps. lvii. 7; Luke i. 17). In particular, all known sin must be abandoned (Isa. i. 16, 17). 2. *The renewal of the altar of the Lord.* The great brazen altar of Solomon (ch. iv. 1) had probably been defiled by idol-rites during preceding reigns, and required reconsecration (Bertheau); while, after sixty years of service, it almost certainly stood in need of repairs (Keil). Most likely Asa's renovation of the altar was of both kinds—an external reparation and a religious consecration. It is commonly a sign that a Church or nation is in earnest in entering upon religious reformation when it attends to the externals as well as to the internals of religion— when it corrects abuses, repairs defects, and adds improvements in the outward means of grace, as well as endeavours to impart to these fresh attractiveness and zeal. Individuals begin not well who neglect to engage all their powers of body, mind, and heart in the work, or to seek for these a new and gracious baptism from above (Rom. xii. 1). 3. *The invitation of the people to a national assembly.* Without the hearty consent and co-operation of the people, reforms of no kind can be effected—as little religious as political or social, and just as little these as those. Accordingly, all Judah and Benjamin, with such Israelites as sympathized with the new movement, were summoned to Jerusalem on a certain day to covenant to seek Jehovah. As early as the days of Rehoboam, strangers from the northern kingdom had found their way into the southern (ch. xi. 16); Asa's victory over Zerah having been accepted as a proof that Jehovah was on the side of Judah's king, the number of these immigrants largely increased (ver. 9). What was wanted then in Judah and Israel to rally the pious is demanded still—a leader, who has God upon his side, because he is on the side of God. 4. *The gathering of the pious in Jerusalem.* It showed the spirit of the people that they responded at once to their monarch's call. Followers that will not follow are a hindrance to those who would lead in reformations in either Church or state. Union is strength, and generally victory; disunion weakness, and always defeat.

II. SOLEMN TRANSACTIONS. (Vers. 12—14.) 1. *The presentation of the spoils.* These, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep, formed part of the plunder taken from Zerah's army (ch. xiv. 14, 15), and were now presented to Jehovah; as Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek on returning from the slaughter of the kings (Gen. xiv. 20); as the Israelites in the wilderness after the slaughter of the Midianites levied a tribute unto the Lord (Numb. xxxi. 11—47); as Saul said he intended to sacrifice unto the Lord the sheep and oxen he had reserved from the spoil of the Amalekites (1 Sam. xv. 21); and as victorious generals among the Romans were accustomed to dedicate to Jupiter part of the spoils taken from the enemy (Adam's 'Roman Antiquities,' p. 327). As Asa's victory had been achieved solely through Divine help, this was becoming as well as right. Those whom God renders successful in their callings should honour him with the firstfruits of their increase (Prov. iii. 9). Every man as God hath prospered him, a rule of Christian giving (1 Cor. xvi. 2). **2.** *The formation of a covenant.* (1) The object—twofold. (*a*) "To seek the Lord God of their fathers," etc. (ver. 12) —a right thing for nations and individuals to do—yea, for all, whether they covenant with and swear to one another concerning it or not. To seek God, a nation's and individual's life (Isa. lv. 3, 6; Ps. lxix. 32; Amos v. 4), and the only source of true prosperity for either (Ps. lxx. 4; cxix. 2; Amos viii. 14; Lam. iii. 25). That the god a nation or an individual seeks is the god of his or its fathers, is no proof that that god is the true God; but, being the true God, he possesses an additional claim on the worship and homage of both individual and nation, from the fact that he is and has been their fathers' God. If God is to be sought at all, it should be with the whole heart (Jer. xxix. 13). Nothing short of this is religion (Deut. xi. 13; xiii. 3; Matt. xxii. 37; Mark xii. 30, 33; Luke x. 27). (*b*) To "put to death," etc. (ver. 13). Under the theocracy religious toleration was impossible, for the reason that idolatry was high treason. "A theocratic government is a government of constraint. Freedom of conscience would have been an unmeaning sound under the Jewish economy" (Pressensé, 'Early Years of the Christian Church,' vol. i. p. 36). Church and state in Judah were one. No such identification existed among heathen nations, though approximations towards it were often seen. Nor does such identification exist under the gospel. Hence neither Church nor state now has authority to put to death those who decline the religion prescribed by either. The reformed Churches of England and Scotland were slow in perceiving that the extermination of heretics by the sword of the civil magistrate, however legitimate under the Jewish theocracy, was not permissible in the Church of Jesus Christ. Under the gospel God alone is Lord of the conscience; and to each man pertains the right of choosing his own religion, his own creed, and his own worship, without dictation, not to say coercion, from either king or parliament—being answerable for the choice he makes in the first place to his own conscience, and in the last place to God, whose creature and subject he is. This is the doctrine of religious equality, which should be carefully distinguished from that of religious toleration, which proceeds upon the erroneous assumption that Church and state possess the right, but decline to exercise the power of coercion, and agree to allow, what they might justly put down, diversity of faith and practice in religion. (2) The form—simple. "They sware unto the Lord;" *i.e.* bound themselves with an oath to carry out the twofold purpose above described. This they did with enthusiasm (ver. 14), which is always good in a good thing (Gal. iv. 18), and especially good in religion (Luke xiii. 24; John ix. 4; Eph. v. 16; Heb. vi. 11). (3) The scene—impressive. In more points than one this high transaction under Asa had a parallel in the National Covenant, which was formed by the Scottish people in Edinburgh on the last day of February, 1638, when in the churchyard of Greyfriars, in the grey dawn, a parchment was spread upon a gravestone, and one by one the nobility, gentry, burgesses, ministers of religion, and common people, with uplifted hand and solemn oath, affixed to it their names, engaging with one another to maintain the Presbyterian form of Church government, and, at the point of the sword, to exterminate the prelatical.

III. SIGNIFICANT RESULTS. (Vers. 15—19.) **1.** *The joy of the people.* (Ver. 15.) This proved they had been in earnest. They exulted in the unanimity and heartiness with which the covenant had been made, and in the prospect thus opened up for the attainment of its objects. 2. *The zeal of the king.* (Vers. 16—18.) (1) The deposition of the queen-mother, Maachah, the mother of Abijah and grandmother of Asa. High rank, venerable age, and near relationship to Asa had given her at court and in the land commanding influence, which she exercised in the interest of idolatry. Her removal by Asa showed him sincere in desiring to effect a reformation (Luke xiv. 26).

(2) The destruction of her abominable image. This, which was made of wood, and is supposed by some to have been an obscene figure, *pudendum*, representing the productive power of nature—which is doubtful (Bertheau and Keil)—was an object of horror and detestation to the Hebrews; its destruction was another indication of the spirit by which Asa was actuated. The only defect in his reformation activity, was that he did not at the same time abolish the high places connected with the worship of Jehovah. (3) The introduction into the temple of the dedicated gifts of his father and of himself. The former, consisting of the spoils Abijah had taken in the war with Jeroboam (ch. xiii. 16)—silver, gold, and vessels—had been used by the conqueror either to adorn some heathen temple or to enrich the royal treasury, but were now surrendered by Asa to the house of the Lord. The latter, composed of similar materials plundered by himself in the Cushite war (ch. xiv. 14, 15), he also presented to their rightful Owner, Jehovah. To restore the former was as much a duty as to give up the latter. "Asa, like a good son, pays his father's debts and his own" (Bishop Hall). 3. *The approbation of Jehovah.* Intimated by the fact that for the next twenty years the land enjoyed rest (ver. 19). "When a man's ways please God, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. xvi. 7). Were nations to please God by their ways, he would "make wars cease to the end of the earth" (Ps. xlvi. 9).

Learn: 1. The stimulus good men derive from God's Word, exemplified in the effect produced upon Asa by Oded's prophecy (ver. 8). 2. The purifying power of true religion on the soul—symbolized by Asa's purgation of the land (ver. 8). 3. The attractive influence upon others of those who have God with them—seen in the rallying of the pious round Asa (ver. 9). 4. The supreme duty of individuals and nations—to seek the Lord (ver. 12). 5. The lawfulness of men covenanting with each other for such a purpose, but not of compelling others (ver. 13). 6. The necessity in religion of proving the heart's sincerity by the hand's activity and liberality (vers. 11, 18). 7. The propriety of being thorough in all undertakings connected with religion—the want of this a defect in Asa (ver. 17).—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

The contents of this chapter fall easily into three parts: Asa's conflict with Baasha (vers. 1—6; parallel, 1 Kings xv. 16—22); Hanani's rebuke of Asa, and Asa's ill reception of it (vers. 7—10); the disease, death, and burial of Asa (vers. 11—14; parallel, 1 Kings xv. 23, 24).

Ver. 1.—For the six and thirtieth year, read *six and twentieth.* Ramah belonged to Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 21, 25, 28), and lay between Bethel and Jerusalem, about five or six Roman miles from each; but Keil and Bertheau, by some error, call it thirty miles from Jerusalem, having very likely in their eye Ramah of Samuel, in Ephraim. The word signifies "lofty," and the present history speaks the importance of its position, and would infer also that Israel had regained Bethel, which, with other adjacent places, Abijah had wrested from Jeroboam (ch. xiii. 19). The reference of Isa. x. 28, 29, 32 is exceedingly interesting, and bespeaks the fact that Ramah commanded another intersecting route from Ephraim. When it is said here that Baasha built (וַיִּבֶן) Ramah, the meaning is that he was beginning to strengthen it greatly, and fortify it. The object of Baasha, which no doubt needed no stating in the facts of the day, is now stated by history.

Ver. 2.—The writer of Chronicles omits the pedigree of this Benhadad King of Syria, given in the parallel "the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion." Benhidri is the name of Benhadad in the Assyrian monuments. The Septuagint gives "Ader," which tallies with it. For Damascus, we have here *Darmesek,* instead of the more usual *Dammesek* of the parallel and Gen. xv. 2; the resh representing (as in Syriac) the dagesh forte in mem. The parallel (1 Kings xv. 18) says that Asa took *all* the silver and the gold left in the treasures, etc.; but the reading "left" should very possibly (see Septuagint Version) be "found," the Hebrew characters easily permitting it.

Ver. 3.—The alliance of the King of Syria was sought now by one kingdom, now by the other. On what occasion Abijah made league with the king, the history does not say, either here or in the parallel, nor when he or his son resigned it. For there is, read "*Let there be* a league between me and thee, as between my father and thy father;" the short cut which Asa thought to take now to his object was not the safe nor right one

Ver. 4.—Benhadad was apparently not very long in making up either his mind or his method. The bribe that tempted him, drawn from "the treasures" described, well replenished (ch. xv. 18; and parallel, 1 Kings xv. 15), was probably large. His method was to create a diversion in favour of his new ally, by "smiting" certain picked and highly important cities of Israel, mostly in northern Galilee, by name "Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali." **Ijon.** In Naphtali, mentioned only now, in the parallel, and when a second time taken (2 Kings xv. 29) by Tiglath-Pileser. **Dan.** The colonizing of this city is given in Judg. xviii. 1, 2, 29—31; it was originally called Laish, and became the northern landmark of the whole country, as in the expression, "from Dan even to Beersheba" (Judg. xviii. 29; xx. 1). **Abel-maim.** This place was situate at the foot of the Lebanon; in the parallel (1 Kings xv. 20) it is called Abel-beth-maachah. It is again mentioned as attacked by Tiglath-Pileser, who wrested it from Pekah (2 Kings xv. 29). In 2 Sam. xx. 18, 14, 15 it is called Abel by itself, but in the last two of these verses Beth-maachah is mentioned in close connection with it. After this name the parallel gives also "all Cinneroth" (Septuagint, "all the land of Cinnereth"). The name is the original of the New Testament *Gennesaret.* It was a city (Josh. xix. 35) that gave its name to the sea and western region of the lake, sometimes called so (Numb. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xi. 2; xii. 3). If there were a little more external evidence of it, we should incline to the opinion of Movers, that the "all Cinneroth" of the parallel is the כָּל־מִסְכְּנוֹת ("all the store-cities") of our present verse. But at present we may take it that the two records supplement one another. **All the store-cities of Naphtali** (see ch. xxxii. 28; viii. 6 and its parallel, 1 Kings ix. 19).

Ver. 5.—**And let his work cease.** The parallel has not this, but follows the exact previous sentence with this, "and dwelt in Tirzah." It is the happy suggestion of one commentator (Professor James G. Murphy, 'Handbook: Chronicles') that this sentence may betray that it had been Baasha's intention to reside in Ramah.

Ver. 6.—The affair seems thus to have come to an unbloody termination. The parallel (1 Kings xv. 22) is so much the more graphic that it contains the two additions that Asa "made a proclamation throughout all Judah," and one that "exempted none" from joining in the duty of moving all the stones and all the timber from Ramah, and diverting them to the use of building Geba and Mizpah. This greatly contributed to command the road from the north to Jerusalem. **Geba.** This was Geba of Benjamin, as clearly stated in the parallel. It was a position north of Ramah, whether opposite Michmash and the modern *Jeba* is not certain, as some think this answers to Gibeah of Saul (1 Sam. xiv. 2, 5). **Mizpah** (see Jer. xli. 2, 3, 9, 10). This Mizpah is not that of the Shefelah (Josh. xv. 38), but was situate about two hours, or a short six miles, north-west of Jerusalem, on the Samaria route, and is probably the modern *Neby Samwil* (see also 2 Kings xxv. 22—26; Jer. xl. 5—xli. 18).

Vers. 7, 8.—The very impressive episode of four verses begun by the seventh verse is not found in the parallel. The fact furnishes clear indication that our compiler was not indebted to the writer of Kings for material. And the moral aspects of the matter here preserved by the compiler of Chronicles show the paramount reasons why he would not miss bringing it to the front for the returned people's better religious education. Presumably Hanani the seer is the father of that other faithful seer and prophet Jehu, who appeared to Baasha (1 Kings xvi. 1, 7) and to Jehoshaphat (ch. xix. 1, 2). **Therefore is the host of the King of Syria escaped out of thy hand.** It is plain that, reading the lines only, this expression (remarkable considering its following close upon successful help given by Benhadad, and help unaccompanied, so far as we are told, by any infidelity or untoward circumstance), suggests option of explanation, and would engender the supposition that something very threatening was on the horizon, at any rate. But reading *between* the lines, and giving due weight to the significance of the illustration adduced of the combined Ethiopians and Lubim (ch. xiv. 9—15), we may warrantably judge that Hanani's inspired language went a cut deeper, and meant that if the alliance had been *not* broken between Benhadad and Baasha, both would surely have been taken in one net (Ps. cxxiv. 7), as they would have entered into the conflict in alliance. A decisive victory over the King of Syria would have been any way a grand day in the history of Judah; but such a victory over the Kings of Syria and of the northern schismatic kingdom would have been more than a doubly grand day; it would have been a tenfold demonstration of God's judgment, that "though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished" (see particularly same Hebrew verb used of a bird escaped in Ps. cxxiv. 7).

Ver. 9.—**Thou shalt have wars.** Although this language at first seems to be intended for very specific application to Asa, yet as we do not read of individual wars occurring after this in his own time, it is quite within a just interpretation of it if we read it as referring to the inevitable experience of the kingdom. Its head and king had just thrown away the opportunity of blocking out one ever-threatening enemy. What more natural consequence than that wars should rush in the rather as a flood, in the after-times?

Ver. 10.—A prison-house; literally, Hebrew, *the house of the* מַהְפֶּכֶת; *i.e.* "of the twisting or distortion;" *i.e.* "the stocks." The word occurs three other times only, all of them in Jeremiah, viz. xx. 2, 3; xxix. 26. (For a forcible parallel, see 1 Kings xxii. 27.) **And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.** This may throw some explanatory, though no exculpatory, light on Asa's wrath and violence towards Hanani; for it probably marks that either some goodly portion of the wiser of the people had anticipated of their own common sense the matter of the message of Hanani the seer, or that they had not failed to follow it with some keenly sympathetic remarks. For our Authorized Version, "oppressed," read a stronger verb, as "crushed."

Ver. 11.—This verse, with the following three, is represented by the very summarized but sufficiently significant parallel of 1 Kings xv. 23, 24. Note that the reference work cited in this verse as the book of the kings of Judah and Israel, is in the paralled cited as "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah." Of course, the latter citation was much the earlier in point of time.

Ver. 12.—His disease was exceeding great. Perhaps a somewhat more literal rendering will more correctly express the emphasis of the original, *e.g. his disease was great even to excess.* **For yet,** read emphatically, ***and also;*** the historian purposing to say that as, in his fear of Baasha, he had not sought the Lord, *but* Benhadad, so, in his excessive illness also, he had not sought the Lord, *but* the physicians!

Ver. 13.—Amid the frequent uncertainties of the chronology, we are glad to get some dates fixed by the agreement of testimonies. *E.g.* this place and the parallel state clearly that Asa's reign was one that lasted to its forty-first year. The parallel, however (1 Kings xv. 23), makes this date one and the same thing with his "old age," while no manipulation of dates can make him (the grandson of Rehoboam and son of Abijah) more than about fifty. And it is somewhat remarkable that, when introduced to us as succeeding to the throne, nothing is said of his tender youth (as, for instance, *is* said in the case of Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 1; xxxiv. 1—3). Nevertheless, the apparent prominence of Maachah awhile would tally with the circumstance of Asa's youth at his accession. Another correspondence in Josiah's career is noticeable; for it is distinctly said that when he was only twelve years of age (ch. xxxiv. 3) "he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places," etc. At a similarly youthful age Asa, therefore, may be credited with doing the like, while later on he took more stringent measures, as for instance with Maachah, the queen-mother.

Ver. 14.—In his own sepulchres; Hebrew, קִבְרֹתָין; fem. plur. of קֶבֶר. The plural designates, of course, the *range* of burial compartments that formed the tomb of one person or family. So Job xvii. 1, where the masc. plur. is used, קְבָרִים לִי. **In the city of David** (see note on ch. xii. 16). **In the bed;** Hebrew, מִשְׁכָּב. The use or associations of this word (found about fifty times) are almost entirely, if not entirely, those of the bed of nightly rest, even when not at the time speaking of nightly rest; and this is the first and only occasion that it is employed to link the grave in kindly analogy with the couch of bodily repose during lifetime. The fact *might* have suggested Bishop Ken's lines in the evening hymn—

> "Teach me to live, that I may dread
> The grave as little as my bed."

In the present instance, however, the writer, whoever he was (query, was he the compiler of our Chronicles, or his original?), is doubtless led to the analogy by considerations more earthly than those enshrined in Ken's hymn, viz. by the somewhat "vain show" of attractiveness and fragrance (probably designed partly for preservative purposes) with which the place was filled, and which were among even patriarchal indications of faith in a future state. **Sweet odours;** Hebrew, בְּשָׂמִים. Of the twenty-nine times that this word occurs in Exodus, Kings, and Chronicles, Esther, Canticles, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, it is rendered in the Authorized Version "spices" twenty-four times, "sweet cinnamon" once, "sweet calamus" once, and "sweet odours" or "sweet smell" three times. The chief and determining references are those in Exod. xxv. 6; xxx. 23; xxxv. 8, 28. **And divers kinds;** Hebrew, זְנִים; plur. of זַן; from the root, זָנַן; unused, but probably one with an Arabic root, meaning "to shape;" hence our noun, meaning a *kind* or *species*, used here and Ps. cxliv. 13 (where the margin renders literally, "from kind to kind"), and in the Chaldee of Dan. iii. 5, 7, 10, 15. **Prepared;** Hebrew, מְרֻקָּחִים; solitary occurrence of pual conjugation of the root רָקַח, "to spice," *i.e.* to spice, season, or prepare oil for ointment purposes. This root occurs in kal future once (Exod. xxx. 33); in kal part. poel five times (Exod. xxx. 25, 35; xxxvii. 29; 1 Chron. ix. 30; Eccles. x. 1); and in hiph. infin. once (Ezek. xxiv.

10). **By the apothecaries' art**; Hebrew, בְּמִרְקַחַת מַעֲשֶׂה. Translate the clause, *and divers kinds compounded by the compounding of art*, which means to say spices skilfully treated and wrought into ointments by professional hands. **A very great burning**; literally, *and they burned for him a burning great even to an exceeding extent.* The *burning* is not the burning of 1 Sam. xxxi. 12, 13 (comp. 2 Sam. xxi. 10—12; 1 Chron. x. 12), but the burning of spices, indicated by the language of our ch. xxi. 19 and Jer. xxxiv. 5.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The disappointing relapse of what had seemed tried worth, knowledge, and proved goodness.* Mournful to the last degree is the impression made on us by what we are given to learn last of the career of King Asa. It is a reversal—not the reversal from bad to good, but of what seemed good and seemed sure, to bad. The humiliating lesson and fresh illustration of human caprice and weakness must be in like spirit and with proportionate humility noted and learned by ourselves. It is, indeed, a chapter of biography which brings again to our lips the reproving and stirring question of the apostle, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not *obey* the truth?" and which reminds us also of language of far lower inspiration (Keble's 'Christian Year:' Eighth Sunday after Trinity)—

> "The grey-haired saint may fail at last,
> The surest guide a wanderer prove;
> Death only binds us fast
> To the bright shore of love."

Among all uncertainties, mournful is the certainty of human uncertainty, and necessary the prolongation of human probation to the extreme limit of life. Let us listen with fresh veneration to the just expression of the virtual beatitude of final perseverance, as pronounced by the lips of Jesus Christ himself, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." Side by side with the broad lesson of human fickleness and liability in the very end to fall, there seem to be peculiarities attending the present history which may yield something to careful notice and analysis, which are replete indeed with instruction, and with the finer of the suggestions of caution and warning. Thus, for instance—

I. THAT ASA WAS WICKED AND TEMPTED TO DEFECTION WAS PROBABLY LARGELY DUE TO THE CLOSENESS OF THE PRESSURE OF APPREHENSION IN A DOUBLE SENSE. Family quarrels are, to a proverb, the bitterest. The foe, the competing king, the dissentient people, were abiding neighbours—nay, of one and the same house, though that a house divided against itself. All this, no doubt, *should* have had exactly the contrary effect, but *did not.* As in great stress of illness, and under great pressure of mortal apprehension brought close home, men will often resort to the trial of remedies, and flee to medical aid they had been the first to disdain and the loudest to condemn under milder and less domestic circumstances, *so*, strange though it were, the subtle influence worked upon Asa, which was powerless to delude him when it was Zerah of Ethiopia, and not Baasha of Israel, who was the confronting enemy.

II. CONVERSELY, ASA WAS PROBABLY DELUDED INTO SUPPOSING THAT THE NEARER DANGER, FROM THE NEARER FOE AND NEIGHBOUR FOE, WAS A DANGER HE COULD BETTER COPE WITH BY HIS OWN UNAIDED RESOURCES, HIS OWN SUPPOSED WISDOM, AND HIS OWN SUFFICIENT DIPLOMACY. It is too true that the more distant enemy we are prone to fear more than the enemy, who is really tenfold dangerous, because he *is* so near us, and very probably has this great and subtle consequent advantage, that he knows us and our weak points better than we know them or know ourselves. There is even such a thing as the Church having greater zeal for the heathen far off than for those worse heathen (and more to be pitied for themselves) who are dread corrosion and canker to the whole body politic at home. It means that men have greater fear of the enemy at a distance than of the serpent in their own bosom! Even Christian men are unconsciously the victims of such beguilement. Distance lends enchantment sometimes; distance lends large-looming apprehension sometimes. But in the matter of our enemy sin, it is ever *one* thing that constitutes our chiefest danger—its *nearness*; the great risk of our overlooking it, because of familiarity with its countenance; of our trifling with it, because we underrate its power to hurt; and of our flattering ourselves that we must be a match for so near a neighbour.

III. ASA IN AN EVIL MOMENT FALLS BACK UPON A MISCHIEVOUS MEMORY OF A FATHER'S ERROR INSTEAD OF A HOLY MEMORY OF A FATHER'S EXCELLENCE. He recalls his father's league with the King of Syria to copy it, and adopt it, and furbish up afresh its dishonourable conditions. He relies on that king, and forgets to "rely on the Lord his God," who had but so lately shown him such wonderful deliverance. He relies on that King of Syria, and gets his work done apparently; but it was done also but very partially, very slightly, very temporarily, and at this immense penalty that "the host of that King of Syria would escape out of his hand;" the meaning of which sentence was only too plain, taught by too many an analogy. The help God gives he *does give*. The help we buy of sin, of guilty compromise, of doubtful friendship, we buy dear often to begin with; but before we have done with our bargain, we find it dear indeed, wastefully dear, exhaustingly dear, ruinously dear!

IV. ASA BOUGHT HIS HELP AT GRIEVOUS AND SACRILEGIOUS EXPENDITURE. The things he should have kept for God, his people, and his temple and its worship, he takes from them.

V. ASA LOST ALL COMMAND OVER HIMSELF. He is wroth with the faithful seer; he was "in a rage" with him for "this very thing," that he *was* faithful; he imprisons him, because he cannot imprison the truth; "and oppresses some of the people at the same time." All went wrong with him, for all was wrong *in* him. Disease, exceeding great, overtakes him; but he had lost *moral* force, for even then "he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." A long life and a very long reign close under the cloud. These *had* been good in him; and though he dies an unhonoured death, he goes to a not unhonoured burial and sepulchre; but they were what "he had made for himself," and the fragrance and perfume of which were "of the apothecaries' art"!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Preferable things.* This cannot be counted among the estimable acts of Asa; we could wish that he had adopted other means for repelling the attack of Baasha—means more worthy of himself as a servant of Jehovah. The abstraction of the gold and silver from the treasury of the house of the Lord may speak to us of the preferableness of—

I. ACQUISITION THAT WE CANNOT LOSE. The custodians of the temple no doubt rejoiced when Asa "brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels" (ch. xv. 18). But it was not many years before they endured the mortification of seeing these valuable things carried out again to enrich the foreigner—possibly to be taken to one of *his* temples. No great acquisition was this. The temple at Jerusalem was more truly blessed by the genuine prayers and praises and sacrifices offered within its precincts, albeit there was nothing left of them that the eye of man could see or his hand could finger. And what are our best, our real possessions? Not the gold and silver, the vessels and the jewels of which the thief may rob us, or some revolution in the market may deprive us; they are the knowledge, the wisdom, the purer tastes and appreciations, the higher and more ennobling affections—the treasures of the spirit, which "no thief can break through and steal," which are not dependent upon the chances of commerce, or the conflicts of armies, or the passage of time.

II. SERVICE THAT CANNOT BE RECALLED. Of little use, indeed, to the temple at Jerusalem was the treasure which Asa first carried in and then "brought out." Of comparatively little service to our friends and neighbours is the temporary service we render them—the money which we require again soon, the favour which is to be "returned," the "friendship" which the first small misunderstanding will disturb and perhaps dissolve. But there are services which, once rendered, cannot be recalled, cannot be "brought out" of the treasury, under any change of mood or circumstance—*knowledge*, and the power which it imparts for all the after-duty and struggle of life; *counsel*, which guided the feet through some labyrinth of difficulty and led them into "a large room;" *comfort*, which sustained the spirit in darkest and most dangerous hours, delivering from despair, restoring to equanimity and hope; *influence*, gently and graciously constraining the soul to enter "the kingdom which cannot be moved," within whose blessed boundaries are found present peace and immortal joy. Live to do good which cannot be undone; to impart that which no mortal hand can take back again; to confer that gift which is secure for ever.

III. A FEARLESS FAITH RATHER THAN A DUBIOUS EXPEDIENCY. It is true that Asa achieved a certain triumph; his plan succeeded—for the time. He bought Benhadad's help with this consecrated treasure, and obliged Baasha to retire, leaving some spoil behind him (vers. 4—6). But might he not have succeeded in another way and by worthier means? If he had committed his cause, his country's security, to the strength and faithfulness of his God, would he not have prevailed at least as well as he did by taking consecrated wealth out of the temple of Jehovah? Would not he who delivered the vast hordes of the Ethiopians into his hands (ch. xiv. 12) have saved him from the designs of Baasha? (see vers. 7, 8). And would he not have prospered in that way, without having this act of violation on his conscience, without having this blot upon his record? A fearless faith in God is better than recourse to a doubtful expediency. The latter *very often* fails to accomplish the purpose in hand; and it *always* does some injury to the character, lowering the standard of behaviour, and leaving some blemish on the life. *Take the higher road* in the journey of life—the way of perfect uprightness, of simple, childlike trust in God. That is the path which leads to *true* success; even if there should be present apparent defeat, it is sure to conduct to a glorious victory in the end.—C.

Ver. 9.—*Divine observation and interposition.* Hanani the seer was evidently a man who was not only bold and brave enough to confront the king with a rebuke, but he was one who had a keen sense of the near presence and power of the Lord "before whom he stood." We may very well believe that it was the latter which explained the former. Let us heed his doctrine while we admire his fidelity.

I. GOD'S ACTIVE OBSERVANCE OF INDIVIDUAL MEN. These vigorous words (of the text) indicate the prophet's belief that God was observing men everywhere, was actively observing them "run to and fro," and was drawing distinctions between the life of one man and another. God's particular and individual observation has been, not unnaturally, objected to on the ground of our human littleness. How can we expect, how can we believe, that the Eternal One would concern himself with the doings or negligences of creatures so remote, so unimportant, so infinitesimally minute as we are? Surely, it is said, such consideration is beneath him. But there are two thoughts which meet this objection and correct this conclusion. 1. The *infinitude* of God. For that includes the infinitely small as well as the infinitely great; it is a distinct denial of this attribute of God, for it is a limitation of his infinity, to maintain that there is one direction to which his power and action do not extend. The infinitude of God positively *requires* us to believe that he is observant of the hearts and lives of individual men. 2. The *fatherhood* of God. Granted that our human spirits are nearly allied to him, share his own likeness, stand in conscious relation to him; are capable of loving, serving, following him; can live on earth the life he lives in heaven, are this and do this in such sense and degree that we can be rightly called and considered his sons and daughters,—and there is no more objection to be taken. Shall not the Divine Father of his human family take particular notice of each one of his children? What fatherhood is that which considers his own child to be unworthy of his notice?

II. THE DISTINCTIONS HE DRAWS BETWEEN THEM. 1. He divides all men into two classes—the evil and the good (see Prov. xv. 3); between those "who fear him and those who fear him not;" between those "who are righteous" and those who "do evil" (see Ps. xxxiv. 15, 16). 2. He divides the good into two classes—the imperfectly and the perfectly devoted. There are those who seek *not* the Lord "with their whole heart," and those who do thus seek him; those whose "heart is not perfect," and those whose "heart is perfect" toward him. This distinction is not *absolute*. The less devoted of the servants of God have their better hours and their nobler impulses; while the more devoted have their lapses and their blemishes. Asa "did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord" (ch. xiv. 2); he and his people "sought the Lord . . . with all their heart and with all their soul" (ch. xv. 12); yet here we find him erring, lacking confidence in God, and "going down" to Syria for help. But taking this into account, it remains true that God distinguishes clearly between those of his servants who are but faint-hearted and feeble in his service, and those who give themselves to him "with their whole desire." Let there be so thorough and so complete a dedication of ourselves, of our powers and of our resources and of our time, to the Person and the cause of our Divine Saviour, that we shall be counted by him among those "whose heart is perfect toward him." We may attain to this, although we may have much still to learn and to acquire as his disciples (see Phil. iii. 12—15).

III. HIS INTERPOSITION ON OUR BEHALF. God would certainly have interposed on behalf of Asa, would have "shown himself strong" in his behalf. He would, said Hanani, have given him a far greater success than that which he attained by his gifts and negotiations with Benhadad (ver. 7). God always succours his faithful ones. 1. He may deliver them *from* their distress; as he had delivered Asa already, and did afterwards deliver Hezekiah. He may give us the victory over our enemies from without—over bodily ill, over opposing circumstances; he may cause us to triumph as "men count" triumph. 2. Or he may grant us deliverance *in* our distress; he may grant us such spiritual elevation that we shall "glory in our infirmity," shall "rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer," shall bear the noble testimony of perfect contentment with the inferior position (John iii. 29); and thus (literally) "show himself strong *in those* whose heart is devoted to him" (Keil's translation).—C.

Vers. 10—14.—*Lessons from last years.* We could well wish the account of the last days of Asa to have been different from what it is. Sombre clouds, casting a chill shadow, gathered in the evening sky. Not that there was actual defection, but there was an amount of infirmity that detracts from the honour which his earlier years had laid up for him. We cannot help feeling—

I. THAT AGE IS NOT ALWAYS AS VENERABLE AS IT SHOULD BE; not even a "good old age;" not even Christian old age. Having enjoyed so much of privilege, and having passed through so much discipline, it ought to exemplify the lessons it has had opportunity to learn—it ought to be calm, pure, steadfast, reverent, godly, pervaded with a Christian spirit. But it is not always thus. Men may be always learning, but never wise; men may pass through a very forest of privileges and of opportunities, and never pluck any fruit from its trees. And if we do not gather the good which is to be gained as we go on our way through life, we shall sink into an old age in which we have attained nothing and lost much. We must see to it that we *do* grow as we live; that we are laying up a store of wisdom and of worth that will make old age honourable and beloved. It is sometimes bare and unbeautiful enough; but it may "still bring forth fruit," and be fair to see as it stands in the garden of the Lord.

II. THAT ONE FALSE STEP IS VERY LIKELY TO LEAD TO ANOTHER. Asa, having made the serious mistake of resorting to the Syrian king instead of trusting in the Lord, now violently resents the rebuke of the prophet of Jehovah; and he even proceeds to an act of positive persecution; and, having gone thus far, he goes yet further by some acts of severity, probably directed against those who sympathized with the imprisoned prophet. Thus wrong leads to wrong, sin to sin. It is the constant course of things. Equivocation leads to falsehood; impurity of thought to indelicacy of speech and licentiousness of action; sternness of spirit to cruelty of conduct; irregularity in worship to ungodliness, etc. And not only does faultiness commonly lead to sin in the same direction, but, as in this case, it often leads to wrong-doing in *another direction.* When the heart is led astray from God, and his will is disregarded in one thing, it is only too likely that that holy will will be defied in another thing. We may well shun the first wrong step, for we have no conception of the consequences it may entail. A wrong act, and still more a wrong course, leaves the heart exposed to the designs of the enemy; it is often found to be the first of a series.

III. THAT RECTITUDE IS PARTLY, EVEN LARGELY, A MATTER OF PROPORTION. (Ver. 12.) Asa rightly enough consulted his physicians and leaned on their professional skill; he was wrong in placing too implicit and too great a reliance upon them; he did not remember, as he should have done, that all human means avail nothing without the blessing of God. He had not enough of the spirit of the psalmist in him (Ps. xxxiii. 17—21). To trust in God and to neglect the various sources of health and strength he offers us—this is a foolish fanaticism which will bear its penalty in suffering and weakness. To resort to human science and to trust it, forgetful of the truth that we can do nothing at all independently of the Divine power—this is impiety. True godliness is found in a wise admixture, a true proportion, of diligence and devotion, of self-reliance and self-surrender, of accepting the help of man and looking for the blessing of God.

IV. THAT WE SHOULD JUDGE OUR CONTEMPORARIES, NOT BY THE LAST THING THEY DID, BUT BY ALL THAT THEY WERE. His subjects, when he died, did not remember against him the infirmities of his last days; they considered what had been his character and his course all through his long reign, and "they made a very great burning for him" (ver. 14). Here they were right. Whether they be of the living or the departed, we should not judge our fellow men by one or two exceptional acts, which may be unlike them and unworthy of them; but by the spirit of their life, by the principles by which they were guided throughout, by the character they built up.—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*A king's (Asa's) mistake.* I. WHEN IT HAPPENED. "In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa" (ver. 1). 1. *An obvious error.* Baasha ascended the throne of Israel in Asa's third year (1 Kings xv. 33), and died in his twenty-sixth (1 Kings xvi. 8). Yet it follows not that this blunder was in the original text. Most likely it crept in through transcription. The existence of such mistakes is not fatal to the claim of Scripture to be regarded as inspired. 2. *A probable solution.* Different explanations have been given. (1) The thirty-six years of ver. 1 should be reckoned from the separation of the kingdoms (Usher, Jamieson); but against this stands the fact that the thirty-six years are stated to have belonged to the reign of Asa, while the assertion that no war occurred in Judah for thirty-five years after its commencement as a separate kingdom is incorrect (ch. xiii. 2). (2) In ch. xv. 19, instead of "thirty-five" should be read "five," and in ch. xvi. 1, instead of "thirty-six" should be inserted "six" (Vaihinger in Herzog, Thenius, Bähr). Thus the war with Zerah would be later than the attack of Baasha, though reported before it; and the connection of the verses would be, "There was no war unto the fifth year of the reign of Asa; but in the sixth year Baasha came up." This shatters itself upon the two facts that Asa's reign began with ten years of quiet (ch. xiv. 1), and that Zerah's invasion must have been before Baasha's attack (ch. xvi. 8). To be sure, as numbers are being altered generally, the "ten" of ch. xiv. 1 might be changed into "five;" but Hanani, in ch. xvi. 8, could hardly speak of the Ethiopian invasion as an historical fact if it had not then taken place. (3) The six and thirtieth year should be the five and twentieth (Adam Clarke). In favour of this may be urged that it is a fair guess. (4) The text should be "in the sixteenth year of the reign of Asa" (Bertheau, Keil, Ewald, Kleinert in Riehm). The chronology of Asa's reign would thus run: (*a*) Ten years of quiet (ch. xiv. 1), in the third of which Baasha usurps the supreme authority in Israel (1 Kings xv. 33); (*b*) the invasion of Zerah (ch. xiv. 9) between the tenth and fifteenth years, probably in the fourteenth; (*c*) the national covenant in the fifteenth year (ch. xv. 10); (*d*) in the sixteenth the threatening advance of Baasha (ch. xvi. 1). The statement that Judah was exempt from war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa (ch. xv. 19) may be harmonized with that in 1 Kings xv. 16, 32, that "there was war between Asa and Baasha King of Israel all their days," by assuming that there was latent hostility between the two kingdoms from the first, but no outbreak of war until Asa's thirty-fifth year (Keil)—the attack here recorded not having culminated in any collision between the two powers on the field of battle, the work of causing Baasha to withdraw having been entrusted to Benhadad.

II. HOW IT WAS OCCASIONED. By Baasha's advance against Judah (ver. 1). 1. *The history of Baasha.* The son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar—not of Ahijah the prophet, who was an Ephraimite of Shiloh (1 Kings xi. 29)—Baasha appears to have been originally a person of obscure station, though he afterwards rose to be a captain in the army of Nadab, Jeroboam's son, as Zimri subsequently was in that of Elah, Baasha's son (1 Kings xvi. 9). During the siege of Gibbethon he conspired against his master, smote him and usurped his throne. Not content with this, he put the whole house of Jeroboam to the sword—an act of cruelty which rebounded on himself and his house

(1 Kings xvi. 12). In the twelfth year of his reign he formed the plan here narrated for inflicting a blow upon Judah and Asa. 2. *The character of Baasha.* More than likely a soldier of distinguished bravery (1 Kings xvi. 5), he was little other than a monster of cruelty (1 Kings xv. 29)—two qualities not often allied. The true hero is seldom cruel; the cruel man is seldom brave. A faithful follower of Jeroboam in the matter of religion, he was an ardent idolater and a persistent corrupter of the people (1 Kings xvi. 2). 3. *The project of Baasha.* To fortify Ramah, the modern *Er-Ram*, in Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 25; Judg. xix. 3), about five miles north of Jerusalem. This town, which properly belonged to Judah—not to Israel (Bähr, Bertheau)—but which Abijah had taken from Jeroboam (ch. xiii. 19), Baasha had not previously conquered (Ewald), but at that time seized. His object probably was (1) to cut off all traffic between the kingdoms—in fact, blockade Jerusalem—that the southern kingdom might be forced to capitulate (Ewald, Bähr); (2) to prevent alliance between Judah and any power north of Israel (Bertheau); and (3) to obtain a footing within the territory of Judah as a basis for future operations (Josephus).

III. IN WHAT IT CONSISTED. In three things. 1. *Not repairing to Jehovah for assistance against Baasha*, as he had formerly done against Zerah (ch. xiv. 11). Perhaps he deemed Baasha a more manageable opponent than the Ethiopian leader had been—an adversary that might be coped with successfully by his own craft, without calling in the battalions of Jehovah. Or, his preceding prosperity may have been his ruin, and this may have been the turning-point on that downward path of spiritual degeneracy which he pursued until he died. On any supposition it was an act of unbelief, and as such a sin; and, considering the success of his former application to Jehovah, an act of folly, and therefore a blunder as well as a sin. This he afterwards learnt from Hanani (ver. 9). 2. *Seeking a league with Benhadad of Syria.* (Ver. 2.) This Benhadad, or son of Ader (LXX.)—in the Assyrian inscriptions Bin-hidri, the son of Hadar, the supreme divinity of Damascus (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 200)—was the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, the King of Syria (1 Kings xv. 18). Damascus, his capital—in Hebrew *Dammések*, in Assyrian *Dimaski* and *Dimmaska*, in Arabic *Dimesch-esch-Schâm*, or shortly, *esch-Scham*—had been a town in the days of Abraham (Gen. xiv. 15; xv. 2), and is still one of the few towns of antiquity that have never lost their primitive splendour and renown. It has been styled "the pearl of the Orient, the beautiful as Eden, the fragrant Paradise, the plumage of the Paradise peacock, the coloured collar of the ring-dove, the necklace of beauty, the door of Caaba, the eye of the East, the Eden of the Moslem," with other such hyperbolical expressions (Riehm's 'Handwörterbuch,' art. "Damascus;" cf. Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 414, etc.; 'Picturesque Palestine,' iii. 143, etc.). Its king was at this time in league with Baasha, who hoped with his assistance to subdue the southern kingdom. He was thus an enemy to Judah, as his predecessor Rezon had been to the united empire (1 Kings xi. 25); and Asa might have reasoned, that not much help of a genuine kind could be obtained from him, least of all by such a stratagem as that adopted. 3. *Resorting to bribery in order to gain his end.* Those who use dishonourable methods to procure any advantage generally over-estimate the advantage they are willing in this way to buy; and, as a consequence, discover in the long run they have been miserably duped. Even had Asa not been at fault in the value he put upon Benhadad's alliance, the means he took to gain it were bad. The argument addressed to Baasha should never have been employed by Asa. The league of Abijah with Tabrimon should never have existed to lend countenance to the proposed league between Asa and Benhadad. But bad actions once done are easily repeated by the doers of them, and imitated by the children of those doers; while children find less difficulty in copying the evil than in following the good examples of their parents. Then Asa, while justified in attempting to dissolve the league between Benhadad and Baasha, should not have resorted to bribery. "A gift destroyeth the heart" (Eccles. vii. 7) of him that gives as of him that receives it. Far less for such an unhallowed purpose should he have robbed the temple, even if it had been permissible to displenish the palace. But not even "the treasures of the palace" should have been employed in dishonourable schemes (the secret-service money of modern governments falls under this condemnation); and much less "the treasures of the Lord's house." Upon the gold and silver of both Church and state should be inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord."

IV. To **WHAT IT CONDUCTED.** Seeming success. Wicked schemes often appear to prosper for a season (Ps. xxxvii. 1; xcii. 7). Three things resulted from Asa's statecraft. 1. *Benhadad accepted the bribe.* (Ver. 4.) The golden and silvern keys of mammon can unlock the doors of most hearts. Great grace is needed to resist the power of money. "Wealth maketh many friends," and "every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts" (Prov. xix. 4, 6). Sometimes others besides wicked persons are guilty of "taking gifts out of their bosom" (Prov. xvii. 23). Asa's present was too much for Benhadad's virtue. The King of Syria deserted his ally, the King of Israel, for the King of Judah, as he would by-and-by desert the King of Judah for the next highest bidder. Nor did he merely not assist Baasha, maintaining as it were an attitude of armed neutrality between the hostile powers, but he treacherously "sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali" (see Exposition). Bad as Baasha was, and infamous as was his project, the character and conduct of Benhadad were equally reprehensible and offensive. But it is no part of wicked men's creed that they should change not when they swear to their own hurt (Ps. xiv. 4), or that they should keep faith with one another longer than appears for their advantage so to do. Modern kings and statesmen are sometimes charged with acting on similar lines in the making and the breaking of treaties. If the charge is true, it is not to their credit, and must ultimately turn to their people's hurt. 2. *Baasha desisted from his fortifications.* He left off building Ramah, and allowed his work to cease (ver. 5). Had Baasha been engaged upon a good work, upon God's work, the falling away of Benhadad would have mattered nothing; but being a wicked man himself, and occupied with a wicked enterprise, when the prop which supported him fell, he also was precipitated to the ground. When creature-arms fail the saints, the saints lean the heavier on the Almighty Arm; when wicked men are deprived of that in which they trust, they have nothing else to trust to. 3. *Asa despoiled Ramah, and turned its stones and timber to his own use.* He built therewith Geba and Mizpah (ver. 6); *i.e.* he fortified them. Both were in Benjamin, the former two miles and a half north of Ramah, on the road to Michmash; the latter thirteen miles and a half from Ramah, on the north road from Jerusalem. Thus what Baasha had collected for the injury, Asa employed in the defence, of Judah. So believers may legitimately use the arguments and learning of heretics and unbelievers to establish the truth which these seek to overthrow (Bossuet). Again, whereas Baasha intended to despoil Judah, he was himself despoiled by both Benhadad (ver. 4) and Asa (ver. 6). Mischief-makers often find their mischief return upon their own heads, and violent dealers see their violence descend upon their own pates (Ps. vii. 15, 16; Prov. xxvi. 27; Matt. vii. 2).

LESSONS. 1. The lust of acquiring the true parent of war (Jas. iv. 1, 2). 2. The wickedness of bribery (Prov. xvii. 23) 3. The certainty of retribution (Numb. xxxii. 23; Gal. vi. 7). 4. The baseness of treachery (Prov. xxv. 19; xxvii. 6; Obad. 7).—W.

Vers. 7—10.—*The king and the prophet.* I. THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE TO THE KING. (Vers. 7—9.) 1. *The prophet's name.* Hanani, "Favourable" (Gesenius); otherwise unknown, though conjectured to be the father of "Jehu the son of Hanani," who announced to Baasha the ruin of his house (1 Kings xvi. 1), and afterwards appeared at the court of Jehoshaphat (ch. xix. 2), having probably been obliged to flee from the northern kingdom on account of his ill-omened communication. (1) This was the second time God had sent a prophet to Asa. God usually gives to men "line upon line, and precept upon precept" (Isa. xxviii. 10). (2) This was a second prophet God had sent to Asa. God has no lack of messengers to run upon his errands. When a word wants speaking to the Church or to the state, he can always find the man to speak it (Ps. lxviii. 11). (3) The message God sent by Hanani was different from that sent by Azariah. That was a word of counsel; this, of rebuke. God always suits his communications to the needs of his hearers. "Every Scripture inspired by God is profitable," etc. (2 Tim. iii. 16). (4) Those who serve God faithfully as his messengers are sure to find ample remuneration. Because of this mission well executed, Hanani has obtained a posthumous renown, which will carry his name throughout the world and to the end of time (cf. Mark xiv. 9). 2. *The prophet's sermon.* (1) A great opportunity lost, with the reason of it. The Syrians might have been crushed, whereas they had escaped, because, instead of relying on Jehovah, he, Asa, had relied upon Benhadad (ver. 7). Compare Elisha's language to Joash of Israel (2 Kings xiii. 19). Nothing commoner than for men to be blind to their own best interests; to be neglectful of the opportunities Providence sets before them for advancing these; and to call in the aid of enemies rather than of friends—of their worst enemy, the devil, rather than of their best friend, Jehovah—when they find themselves placed in some critical situation. (2) A great victory recalled, with the secret of it. The mighty host of the Ethiopians and the Libyans had been defeated; their horsemen and chariots routed by Judah's spearmen and bowmen, and that, as Asa knew, not by their own prowess or by his generalship, but because, in answer to prayer, Jehovah had entered the field upon his side (ver. 8). It is strange how easily and quickly men forget Divine interpositions on their behalf, and how readily, almost how naturally, they put these to their own credit rather than to God's. "Time hath, my lord, a wallet on his back" (Shakespeare, 'Troilus and Cressida,' act iii. sc. 3). No example better to be followed by a Christian than that of David (Ps. ciii. 2). A good memory would often save a Christian from foolish blunders. (3) A great doctrine stated, with the lesson of it. Asa should have known that the eyes of the Lord were ever running to and fro throughout the earth, to show himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts were perfect before him, and that all he had to do was to see that his heart was perfect before God, and to show the same by trusting in him (ver. 9). See homily on "The eyes of the Lord." (4) A great sin committed, with the disastrous result of it. In turning his back upon Jehovah and repairing to Benhadad, he, Asa, had acted foolishly (ver. 9). He had not only blundered, perpetrated an error in judgment, but done what was inherently wicked; and, as a consequence both of his blunder and of his sin, he "would have wars"—which he had in the continued hostility of the northern kingdom. Observe the double aspect of sin, as an act of folly and a deed of wickedness, and the double aspect of retribution, as at once the natural outcome or result of human folly and the positive infliction of a judicial sentence.

II. THE KING'S ANSWER TO THE PROPHET. (Ver. 10.) 1. *He was angry with the prophet.* Good men as well as bad may fall into danger, but in both it is sin. If Asa's "heart was perfect all his days," it is clear his life was not. He was "wroth with the seer." Anger is a work of the flesh (Gal. v. 20), the passion of a foolish heart (Eccles. vii. 9), and the foam of an unbridled tongue (Prov. xxv. 28; Hos. vii. 16). Outrageous in any (Prov. xxvii. 4), it is unbecoming in all, but especially in kings, and not allowable in Christians (Col. iii. 8). Asa was angry with Hanani because Hanani told him of his fault. Even good men require large grace before they can say, "Let the righteous smite me," etc. (Ps. cxli. 5). Yet the rebukes of the righteous should be received submissively (Lev. xix. 17) and with grateful affection (Prov. ix. 8). He who so welcomes them shall be honoured (Prov. xiii. 18); get understanding (Prov. xv. 32); exhibit prudence (Prov. xv. 5); and abide among the wise (Prov. xv. 31). 2. *He put the prophet in a prison-house*; literally, "in a house of stocks," the "stock" being "an instrument of torture, by which the body was forced into an unnatural, twisted position, the victim, perhaps, being bent double, with the hands and feet fastened together" (Keil). Into some such place of confinement Jeremiah was thrust (Jer. xx. 2; cf. xxix. 26), and Paul and Silas (Acts xvi. 24). "The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion" (Prov. xix. 12). If, in Hanani's case, it did not turn out "messengers of death" (Prov. xvi. 14), it was because Asa was at bottom a good man, whose hand as well as heart were in the keeping of the Lord (Ps. lxxvi. 10). 3. *He oppressed those who took the prophet's side.* These were, doubtless, the pious section of the people who had not approved of the Syrian alliance. It is seldom that a wicked policy can be entered on by kings or parliaments (at least in a Christian land) without some voice or voices being raised against it. Unhappily, these have often to share obloquy and oppression, as Hanani's supporters did. Yet nothing is more calamitous for a country than to see the best people in it persecuted by its rulers for protesting against their crooked ways. When a policy cannot be defended or carried through without imprisoning those who are opposed to it, that policy is wrong!

LESSONS. 1. The certainty that God sees everything that is done beneath the sun. 2. The goodness of God in reproving wrong-doers. 3. The folly of leaning upon an arm of flesh instead of upon God. 4. The source of all calamity among men, viz. sin. 5. The sign of an evil conscience—anger against an accuser. 6. The uselessness of force as a remedy for evils of any kind. 7. The courage required of them who would champion the cause of truth and right.—W.

Ver. 9.—*The eyes of the Lord.* I. A MOMENTOUS DECLARATION. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." The words teach the doctrines of: 1. *The Divine omniscience;* since "the eyes of the Lord" not only see to the ends of the earth, and "run to and fro throughout the earth," but are in every place at the same time. 2. *The Divine vigilance;* since God not merely knows all that transpires on the earth and beneath the heavens, but, as it were, lies in wait to discover opportunities for interposing on his people's behalf. Contrast with this exalted doctrine the teaching of the 'Odyssey' (xvii. 485): "The gods, in the likeness of strangers from far countries, put on all manner of shapes, and wander through the cities, beholding the violence and the righteousness of men."

II. A CHEERING CONSOLATION. "To show himself strong on behalf of them whose hearts are perfect towards him." The object of the Divine interposition is not so much to punish and destroy the wicked, although that is indirectly implied, as it is to rescue and succour his people. 1. *In times of danger;* like that of Israel at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 15—30), or that of Asa on the field of Zephathah (ch. xiv. 12), or that of Judah when the army of Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings xix. 35), or that of David when pursued by Saul (Ps. xviii. 17), or that of Elisha in Dothan (2 Kings vi. 17), or that of Daniel in Babylon (Dan. vi. 22). 2. *In seasons of affliction;* such as befell the Israelites in Egypt (Exod. ii. 23—25), and the Jews in Babylon (Ezra i. 1); such as overtook Jacob in Hebron (Gen. xxxvii. 34; xlv. 28), Job in Uz (Job i., ii., iii., xlii.), David in Jerusalem (Ps. vi. 8), and the Hebrew children in Babylon (Dan. iii. 25). 3. *In moments of trial;* which oftentimes come upon his people as they came upon Abraham (Gen. xxii. 11), Joseph (Gen. xxxviii. 12), David (1 Sam. xxvi. 9), and Job (ii. 9), and in which God's people could hardly hope to stand without Divine assistance.

III. A SEARCHING APPLICATION. Have we those perfect hearts to whom this Divine succour is promised? 1. *This means not—Are we sinless?* Noah was "perfect" (Gen. vi. 9), and yet "he drank of the wine, and was drunken" (Gen. ix. 21); Job was "perfect" (i. 1), and yet God charged him with offences which caused Job to say, "Behold, I am vile" (xl. 4); David's heart was "perfect" (1 Kings xi. 4), yet David was guilty of grievous sins (2 Sam. xi. 4); Asa's heart also was "perfect" (ch. xv. 17), and yet Asa went astray in the war with Baasha (ver. 2). In the New Testament the Corinthians are designated "perfect" (1 Cor. ii. 6), and yet some of them were so far from sinlessness that they committed very gross offences against morality (1 Cor. v. 1; vi. 1). 2. *This means—Are we sincere in our profession of religion?* Where sincerity is wanting, religion is impossible. Nothing more reprehensible in itself, or more offensive to both God and man, than hypocrisy—pretending to be a servant of God when one is really a slave of Satan; to be a lover of righteousness when one is secretly a doer of unrighteousness. Scripture in both its parts pronounces woe against hypocrites (Job viii. 13; xv. 34; Matt. xxiii. 13; Luke xi. 44).—W.

Vers. 11—14.—*The career of Asa.* I. HIS LIFE. 1. *The length of his reign.* Forty-one years. His father, whose "heart was not perfect" towards God (1 Kings xv. 3), reigned only three years (ch. xiii. 3). The Old Testament promised long life as a reward to piety (Ps. xxxiv. 12—14). But, even without a special promise, a religious life is calculated to prolong days. "Fear God, and keep his commandments," is the first rule of health. 2. *The incidents of his reign.* (1) The reformation of religion (ch. xiv. 3). (2) The building of fortresses (ch. xiv. 6). (3) The preparation of an army (ch. xiv. 8). (4) The defeat of Zerah the Ethiopian (ch. xiv. 9). (5) The formation of a grand national covenant (ch. xv. 8). (6) The making of a league with Benhadad (ch. xvi. 1). (7) The oppression of his people (ch. xvi. 10). 3. *The character of his reign.* (1) Peaceful. It began with ten years of quiet (ch. xiv. 1); and, with the two exceptions above specified, it had no more hostile invasions to repel. (2) Prosperous. Since the days of Solomon the kingdom had not attained to such a pinnacle of excellence—of material strength and religious consolidation—as it did under the son of Abijah.

II. HIS DEATH. 1. *The date of it.* In the forty-first year of his reign; most likely he was over sixty at the time of his decease. 2. *The cause of it.* Twofold. (1) Disease. Two years before his end he became diseased exceedingly in his feet; probably with gout (Clarke, Jamieson). Whatever its nature, it was fatal. Disease a sure precursor of death, of which every ailment should be a monitor. (2) Unbelief. Had he consulted Jehovah about his malady (the Chronicler suggests), he might have been cured; but, as in repelling Baasha's attack he relied more on Benhadad than on Jehovah, so in his illness he repaired to the physicians instead of to Jehovah. To infer from this that Asa sinned in consulting a doctor, and that Christians should abstain from calling in medical advisers when out of health, is unreasonable. Asa's error lay, not in consulting the physicians, but in reposing trust in them to the exclusion of the Lord; and, as Paul took Luke the physician with him on his missionary journeys (Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11), it may be argued that he at least did not regard it as inconsistent with religious principle to either give or accept medical advice. Still, what the doctors could not do for Asa, Jehovah could have done had he been consulted (Exod. xv. 26; Ps. ciii. 3); so that unbelief was a real cause of Asa's death. Perhaps it is the cause of many deaths still. Without hinting that many practitioners are no better than those of whom the Gospels tell (Mark v. 26; Luke viii. 43), it is still true that physicians cannot cure without the Divine blessing; and, doubtless, in cases that is withheld, because it is not asked either by the physician or his patient.

III. HIS BURIAL. 1. *The place of his sepulture.* The city of David, where his fathers slept (1 Kings xv. 24), yet not in the general tomb of the kings, but in "his own sepulchres;" in a tomb he had specially caused to be excavated for himself (ver. 14). Joseph of Arimathæa hewed out a tomb for himself (Luke xxiii. 53). The first thing a Pharaoh of Egypt did on ascending the throne was to construct for himself and descendants a royal mausoleum (Harkness, 'Egyptian Life and History,' p. 57). 2. *The manner of his entombment.* (1) His corpse was embalmed. The bed on which it was laid was filled with sweet odours and spices of divers kinds, prepared by the apothecaries' art. Strictly speaking, this was only an imitation of the Egyptian practice (Keil, 'Archaologie,' § 115; Riehm, art. "Begräbnis"). Compare the embalmments of Jacob (Gen. l. 2) and of Jesus (John xix. 39, 40). (2) A very great burning was made for him. This burning was not of the body (A. Clarke), which, among the Hebrews, was commonly interred—the burning of the bodies of Saul and his sons (1 Sam. xxxi. 12) being exceptional—but of the prepared spices. Other nations practised similar rites at the funerals of kings. Jehoram (ch. xxi. 19) and Jehoiakim (Jer. xxii. 18), on account of their wickedness, were denied such honours; Zedekiah was promised them (Jer. xxxiv. 5), perhaps, on account of his misfortunes.

IV. HIS CHARACTER. 1. *A good man.* His heart was perfect (ch. xv. 7; 1 Kings xv. 14), if his life was not (ch. xvi. 10). The general tenor of his conduct was upright, though he erred somewhat towards the close of his career. "It was thought a high eulogy on Jehoshaphat his son that he walked in all the way of his father" (Rawlinson); while the honours paid Asa on dying showed that his countrymen esteemed him to have been an honourable prince. His "faults and follies" may suggest that no man is perfect, and that "in many things we all offend." 2. *An ardent reformer.* He removed the altars and the high places of the strange gods or foreign divinities (ch. xiv. 3), though he left standing those belonging to Jehovah (ch. xv. 17; 1 Kings xv. 14). He "commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers" (ch. xiv. 4), and bound them by a solemn league and covenant so to do (ch. xv. 14), though he himself, in old age, declined a little from his early faith (ch. xvi. 2, 12). 3. *A valiant soldier.* That with his piety he combined courage, his encounter with Zerah the Ethiopian evinced. If he was genuinely good, he was also conspicuously great.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

To the contents of this chapter, and to the reign of Jehoshaphat, which occupies this and the following three chapters, the Book of Kings furnishes as yet no parallel. All that it has to say of Jehoshaphat now is summed up in one sentence (1 Kings xv. 24), "And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead," till we arrive at the ten verses of 1 Kings xxii. 41—51, with their very slender sketch (see also 2 Kings iii. 1—14).

Ver. 1.—**Jehoshaphat.** In ch. xx. 31 and 1 Kings xxii. 41, 42 we are told that Jehoshaphat was now thirty-five years of age. He must, therefore, have been born when Asa was in the sixth year of his reign, and presumably not under sixteen years of age. His reign extended to twenty-five years, *i.e.* from B.C. 914 to B.C. 889. The name signifies "whom God judges," or "pleads for." Ahab is now in the fourth year of his reign, and the symptoms he manifests (1 Kings xvi. 30—33) are those that the rather urge Jehoshaphat to strengthen himself, *i.e.* strengthen the defences of his kingdom on the Israel side.

Ver. 2.—**He placed forces;** literally, *he gave* (Gen. i. 17) *forces*, or a force, or host, or army: חַיִל (Exod. xiv. 28; 2 Sam. xxiv. 2). **And set garrisons;** again literally, *he gave garrisons* (נְצִיבִים); *i.e.* either the *persons* "set over," prefects or officers (1 Kings iv. 19), or the military garrison itself "stationed" (1 Sam. x. 5; xiii. 3). A village in Judah also had the name Nezeb (Josh. xv. 45). **In the cities of Ephraim** (see ch. xv. 8).

Ver. 3.—**The first ways of his father David.** Although there would be no difficulty in reconciling this statement with history, yet probably the name David should not stand here. It is not in the Septuagint. The most natural and sufficient reference is to Asa. **And sought not unto Baalim;** literally, *to the Baalim;* i.e. to the various false gods of surrounding peoples (Judg. ii. 11), Baal-berith (Judg. viii. 33; ix. 4, 46), Baal-zebub (2 Kings i. 2), Baal-peor (Numb. xxiii. 28, etc.; xxv. 3), according to the places where the idolatrous worship was carried on. (For the preposition לְ, "to," after "sought," in this and following verse, see again 1 Chron. xxii. 19.)

Ver. 4.—**After the doings of Israel.** This expression probably marks the doings of the northern kingdom, as both the more typical throughout its whole history of the wrong, and also as the systematic beginning, "by a law," of idolatrous worship and images in the matter of the calves and so on.

Ver. 5.—**All Judah brought presents to Jehoshaphat.** These *presents* were, of course, voluntary gifts, though, like not a few others, custom may have taken off from them something of the bloom of spontaneousness (1 Sam. x. 27; 2 Sam. viii. 2; 1 Kings iv. 21; x. 25; Ps. lxxii. 10).

Ver. 6.—**And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord.** Although the verb גָּבַהּ often carries a bad sense with it, it quite as often carries with it a good one in the Old Testament, and the typical instance of the former (Ps. cxxxi. 1) is fully counterbalanced by Isa. lii. 13. The marginal "was encouraged" may be superseded with advantage by "took courage" (Isa. xl. 29—31). **The groves.** Supersede this incorrect rendering by *the Asherim;* and upon the seeming discrepancy, see again ch. xv. 17, and "Introduction to Chronicles" there quoted.

Ver. 7—9.—**He sent;** Hebrew, שָׁלַח. The Hebrew text distinctly says, he sent to his princes, not, "he sent his princes." The meaning is—he sent orders to his princes to see to it that Judah was taught (ver. 9) the book of the Law of the Lord (Lev. x. 11; Deut. iv. 9; xvii. 18), not, indeed, without their own personal aid in whatever way able to be given, but systematically and with authority by the Levites and priests (Deut. xxxiii. 10). This deeper fathoming of the needs of the time, and of what constituted its real safety, was greatly to the spiritual credit of Jehoshaphat. The references (ch. xv. 3; xxxv. 2—4, 10—12) are full of point. None of these princes, or Levites and priests, are elsewhere mentioned by name.

Ver. 10.—The moral effect of this peaceful war of Jehoshaphat is manifestly great.

Ver. 11.—**The presents** were probably enough in the nature of tribute, the "fixed rate" of which is sometimes alluded to (1 Kings iv. 21; x. 25; 2 Sam. viii. 2), but it is doubtful whether the word מַשָּׂא purports to say this. The word means "bearing" or "carrying," and then "a burden, load, or weight." The expression (ch. xx. 25), "more than they could carry away," where this word is used, favours the idea that the meaning here is "silver of great weight." Probably the moral significance and historical interest, whether of this statement respecting the Philistines, or the following respecting the Arabians, lies in the fact that both of them brought, without more ado, their payments, and did not seek to slip out of their engagements with Judah and Judah's king. Note, for confirmation of this view, 2 Kings iii. 4, 5.

Ver. 12.—Castles. This rendering, better than "palaces" (margin), would bear improving to the rather stronger word "fortresses," Hebrew, בִּירָנִיּוֹת, found only here and in ch. xxvii. 4, plur. of בִּירָנִית, connected with the Chaldee and later Hebrew, בִּירָה, of Ezra vi. 2; Neh. i. 1; Esth. i. 2; Dan. viii. 2. **Cities of store** (see note under ch. viii. 4; see also 1 Kings ix. 19; Exod. i. 11).

Ver. 13.—Much business; Hebrew, מְלָאכָה. The meaning of the word is "service," "labour bestowed;" and the verse reads, "And there was to him much labour in the cities of Judah, and men of war, mighty men of valour, in Jerusalem;" i.e. *He bestoweth much pains on the cities of Judah, and had*, etc. The word "were," Authorized Version *italics*, is incorrectly inserted. The former half of this verse would better constitute the end of ver. 12. Keil, however, maintains the rendering "substance," "property," for מְלָאכָה (Exod. xxii. 7, 10).

Ver. 14.—This verse, with the following four, gives us the names of five captains, chiefs, *princes*, or military officers for the kingdom's service, with the numbers of the troops they severally commanded. **The numbers of them** (see note under 1 Chron. xxiii. 11); Hebrew, פְּקֻדָּם. The better English rendering to carry at once the signification would be, *The muster of them*, etc. **The captains . . . the chief.** In both cases the Hebrew is the familiar word for "prince" (שָׂר); in the former without article, in the latter with article. The numbers of this and following four verses are not only absolutely unreliable, but in themselves impossible. **According to the house of their fathers;** *i.e.* the quotation is drawn from an army catalogue, arranged carefully by fathers' houses (Numb. i. 18, 22, etc.).

Ver. 15.—The captain. So again read, *the prince*.

Ver. 16.—Amasiah, the son of Zichri. This man is not titled at all. The description of him as one who had **willingly offered himself unto the Lord,** not elucidated by the context or any effective parallel, will mark something honourable in his history. Possibly he comes from an unexpected quarter, and is a man of approved skill. Nothing further is known of these three men. Meantime it has been suggested (Professor Dr. J. Murphy, of Belfast, 'Handbook to Chronicles') that the first of the three was for Judah proper the second for that contingent of Judah that hailed from Dan and the Philistines; and the third for that of Simeon and the Arabs.

Ver. 17.—Of Benjamin . . . armed men with bow and shield (see ch. xiv. 8, and note thereunder).

Ver. 18.—While Eliada of last verse was for Benjamin, Professor Dr. Murphy supposes that **Jehozabad** was for the annexed part of Ephraim. But no suppositions of this kind can avail to explain the numbers in the text, which is no doubt corrupt.

Ver. 19.—These waited; Hebrew, הַמְשָׁרְתִים, plur. piel part. of שָׁרַת. The verse states that this enormous fivefold army, with its five princes (counting, in our corrupt text, one million one hundred and sixty thousand), was the king's Jerusalem standing army, while other separate regiments or bands of troops were spread through all Judah, where they might be most needed for defence.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The first chapter of Jehoshaphat's career.* Although to the end Jehoshaphat was neither an unfaithful king nor an unfaithful man, and certainly no apostate, yet the first chapter of his career reads the best. The mounting of the sun was fine, but clouds hung about the noonday sun, and the setting was not a sky of perfect western glory. The unfolding of the bud looked towards a perfect flower, but some blight seemed to visit it, and some worm was in the fruit. The three chief features of this beginning of Jehoshaphat's reign show most healthfully, as follows:—

I. HIS VARIED DETERMINED ATTENTION AND DEVOTION TO HOME. Policy would dictate it, kindness and love would urge it, in all the wide range of its analogies; wisdom would smile upon it; but duty, with solemn, dignified voice, commands it. The Christian of youngest earliest faith is taught to provide for his own household; the apostles are to begin at Jerusalem; the man of business belies the name and forfeits his character, and brings himself to the ground, if he do not follow a similar rule; and certainly the king and the man in authority, be the nature of his rule what it may, can make himself no exception. We see with satisfaction King Jehoshaphat make his footing sure in this essential way. These all rehearse the principle that every man must rule first the domain of his own innermost kingdom, his own heart and life, where none may rule, nay, none *can*, except himself—or himself and God!

II. HIS LEGISLATION FOR THE REVIVAL OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE

PEOPLE, AND HIS CARRYING OF THE SAME INTO EFFECT. Ignorance is no safety, though knowledge *is* responsibility. Mere knowledge, mental gift, mental activity, mental acquisition, mental store, and store of experience, even,—these are no reliable sources of real safety, neither guide nor refuge for the real life. For *these, religious* education is necessary. Religious education rests on religious knowledge. Religious knowledge rests on religious teaching and teachers, and these mean the teaching and the teachers of revelation. *So* the right principles of action get reached, and motive dormant or even unborn springs into life and action. Nor is it immaterial to observe—the very opposite, indeed, of immaterial—that, in so complex and multitudinous a life as that of a nation, it must be more than ever hopeless, that any principle can *motive* its life, any mechanism regulate it, any influence elevate and purify it, except such as work just as religion does, on *every* individual equally, on the innermost thought and feeling of every individual, and with *no secondary* force, but with sovereign authoritative command met by willingly conceded obedience from the heart. In nothing throughout all his reign was Jehoshaphat *so* right as in restoring and paying all attention to the restoring of religious education.

III. THE GREAT, MOST EXCEPTIONAL, AND MOST TO BE DESIRED HARVEST REAPED. The *greatness* of that harvest was seen in the fact that it was so general, so widespread. "All the lands round about Judah" (elsewhere we learn or may gather that this description embraced Israel also to a large extent) and "Philistia" and "Arabia" swelled it. They who had silver, brought silver; and they who had flocks, flocks. The *exceptional* character of it lay in the fact that it was so largely due to moral sources. Jehoshaphat had not as yet waged a war nor fought a battle. But the fame of him round about was as of the coming man. And it may most justly be pronounced a harvest that was *to be desired*, in that it is more pointedly described, most precisely described as the result of *this*, that it was, behind and above all else, "the fear of the Lord" that "fell on all." There is no so honourable reward, title, "present," that can be conferred on mortal man, as that which comes to that man by virtue of "the fear of the Lord" falling on those around him, and yet somehow linking him with it. It *looks* as though he had been very right himself, unusually right; yet in nothing more right, nothing more happy, than in the impression which it would appear he has honestly and successfully given, that it is and has been as the servant and minister of the Lord, that he has been acting, under *him*, for *him*, and with the smile of *his* prospering blessing resting on him, and his seed-sowing and growing.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Spiritual fortification.* Jehoshaphat did well to "strengthen himself against Israel." One that ought to be in the closest possible relationship to us but that is formally separated from us and that is likely to be jealous of our power is most to be feared by us. The avowed enemy is not so hostile as the envious rival, as the unfriendly "neighbour." And there was nothing of untrustfulness in this procedure of the king's. Had he gone to Syria as his father did (ch. xvi. 2) for help against Israel, he would have been open to just rebuke as Asa was; but in keeping his own fortresses in good sound condition, in seeing that they were well manned and fortified, he was simply acting with that practical sagacity which is not condemned but commended of God (Luke xvi. 9, 10). The words suggest to us some lessons concerning the wisdom of spiritual fortification.

I. THE SUPREME QUESTION. Are we in the enemy's country, in a strange land; or are we in our own true home? Are we in a state of spiritual bondage or dependence, or are we enjoying true spiritual liberty? Is God our only Sovereign, and are we rejoicing in his gracious, benignant sway? Are our souls right with him, and, being right with him, are they free from the tyranny of all other lords? Is our spiritual estate one of honourable loyalty to God and of honourable freedom from all servitude and subjection?

II. THE NEXT VITAL CONSIDERATION. Are we taking wise measures to "strengthen ourselves" against our natural or probable enemies? It is most unwise to assume that because it is well with us now, it must always be well with us. "Final perseverance" as a sacred obligation is an excellent doctrine, but not as a mere comforting assumption. (1) The exhortations of the Divine Word (Rom. xi. 20; 1 Cor. ix. 27; x. 12; Rev. iii. 2, 11); (2) the numerous well-attested facts we have read and those we have witnessed; (3) the weakness of which we are conscious;—all these considerations urge us to consider what we should do to "strengthen ourselves," what steps we should take that the neighbouring enemy may not encroach, that the estate which God has given us to guard may be held inviolate. Of what kind shall be our—

III. SPIRITUAL FORTIFICATION. How shall we "place forces in our fenced cities," and "set garrisons in the land"? We shall do this: 1. *By forming wise habits of devotion.* (1) Of public and also (and more particularly) of private devotion; (2) such habits as will encourage the greatest possible measure of spontaneous and spiritual communion; (3) such habits as will secure the twofold communication—God speaking to us and our speaking to him. 2. *By entering on a course of sacred usefulness.* Nothing is so likely to keep the flame of piety alight on the altar of our hearts, to preserve our own moral and spiritual integrity, as doing, regularly and methodically, some real service to other souls. 3. *Maintaining a right attitude of soul.* The attitude of humility, and therefore of conscious dependence on God; the attitude of wariness and watchfulness against the first uprising of evil against us or within us; the attitude of thoughtfulness; the disposition to let our mind go toward those things which are highest and worthiest, toward the truth of God, toward the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. With such "fenced cities" as these in the soul, we shall be strong against the enemy whom we have most to fear.—C.

Vers. 3—6.—*The wise choice and the happy course.* We have before us here the king who made the wise choice, and who consequently ran through a very happy course. In *him* we have an example; in *it* a promise for ourselves.

I. THE WISE CHOICE, WHICH IS AN EXAMPLE TO US. Jehoshaphat: 1. Preferred the true God to the false deities; he "sought to the Lord God of his father," and he "sought not unto Baalim." Moreover, he set before him, as that which he should copy: 2. The best part of the best man's life. Not the life of the less perfect Abijah or Rehoboam, or even Solomon, but David; and of his life, not the latter part, which was more luxurious and less pure, but "the *first* ways of his father David," which were less luxurious and more pure than the last. Herein he showed an excellent judgment. He could not have done a wiser thing, as he certainly could not have done anything more solemnly and stringently binding upon him, than resolve to cleave to the "God of his fathers"—the God who had called both king and kingdom into existence, to whom he and his people owed all that they were and had. There were certain fascinations connected with the worship of Baalim appealing to their lower nature; but what were these to the weighty and overwhelming considerations that bound him to Jehovah? And he could not have done better than choose for his exemplar the devout and faithful David; and, choosing him, to select the earlier and worthier part of his very checkered and somewhat uneven life. Before us is a similar choice, and we must make up our mind what we will decide upon. (1) We have to choose what God we will serve; whether the Lord God of our fathers, whether the heavenly Father, the Divine Saviour and Friend of our souls, or whether this passing world with its lower interests, its fading honours, its transient joys. (2) We have to determine in whose steps we will follow; whether those of the ambitious, or of the pleasure-seeking, or of the aimless man, or those of the reverent and earnest man; and again, if we choose the last, whether we will direct our eye to those elements in his character and to those portions of his life which are not the second-best, but the noblest and worthiest of all.

II. THE HAPPY COURSE, WHICH IS A PROMISE FOR US. Jehoshaphat had all that a king could well wish for. 1. A sense of God's favouring presence (ver. 3). 2. A sense of growing security throughout his kingdom (ver. 5). 3. The testimony of his people's attachment to his person (ver. 5). 4. Honour as well as abundance (ver. 5). 5. Elation of heart, great and continuous gladness in the service of Jehovah (ver. 6). 6. The expenditure of his power in further cleansing usefulness (ver. 6). What rewards of the king's fidelity were due to his royal position we, of course, cannot look for. But if we make the wiser choice we may reckon upon a life of true and real blessedness. To us there will be secured (1) all needful temporal good (Ps. xxxvii. 25; xxxiv. 22;

Matt. vi. 33; 1 Tim. iv. 8); (2) the conscious and abiding presence of God (John xiv. 23; xv. 4; Rev. iii. 20); (3) the peace which, not as the world gives, Christ gives to his own, and the joy which no man taketh from us; (4) the spiritual conditions of holy usefulness, the means and opportunity of exerting a pure and elevating influence on many hearts, and thus of uplifting and ennobling many lives; (5) the hope that maketh not ashamed.—C.

Vers. 7—9.—*A strong because instructed people.* Jehoshaphat had not been long on the throne before he took a step admirably adapted to benefit and, indeed, to bless the nation. Better than "strengthening himself against Israel" by increasing his garrisons (vers. 1, 2) was the enlightenment of "all the cities of Judah," the teaching of "the people" (ver. 9) from "the book of the Law of the Lord."

I. STRENGTH IN INSTRUCTION. It is well for a land to have its strong, unassailable fortresses, its well-garrisoned towns, its frontier of steep mountain or of precipitous rock. But the strength of a nation does not reside in such defences as these; it lies in the intelligence, the vigour, the courage, the patriotism, of its people. All material munitions will fail to keep out the enemy when "the people" are corrupt and enfeebled. Without any remarkable fortifications constructed by human art and labour, a free, brave, godly nation will be respected and preserved. And such a nation will be only found where there is knowledge and consequent intelligence. You cannot build anything durable on ignorance. Ignorance means folly, indulgence in the lower pleasures, feebleness, decline. "Knowledge is power" in more ways than one.

II. INSTRUCTION IN SACRED TRUTH. Power needs to be rightly guided; misguided, it is the source of greatest evil. Everything depends on the way in which intelligence is directed. Genius, working towards an evil end, is a force that is simply terrible. The world can suffer no sadder infliction than a man or a community possessed of the power of highly cultivated intelligence, but unregulated by righteous principles, abandoning itself to unworthy impulses. Therefore was it of the first importance that those who went "throughout all the cities of Judah" should "teach the people" from "the book of the Law of the Lord." Thence they would gain those directing truths, those commanding principles which would lead in the ways of holiness and heavenly wisdom. Therefore is it of the first importance, here and everywhere, that throughout all our cities and all our towns and villages we should not only have "the schoolmaster abroad," but have the Christian teacher also, busily, earnestly, faithfully making known the will of God, the truth and grace of Jesus Christ, basing all character on sound morality, and basing all morals on their only sound foundation, Christian truth.

III. SACRED TRUTH SUPPLIED IN EVERY OPEN WAY. Jehoshaphat did not think it enough to leave things to be done by existing institutions. Like a wise and an earnest man, he cast about for additional methods, he looked in all directions for competent men to effect his pious purpose. And he called out: 1. The man who brought the weight of his social position—the prince (ver. 7). 2. The man who carried the influence of his sacred office—the priest (ver. 8). 3. The man who contributed the strength of special training—the Levite (ver. 8). Thus wisely and effectively are we to work. In our country there is: (1) Scope for much Christian instruction throughout the land. There are the young coming up to be taught; there are the neglected and spiritually ignorant multitudes crowded in our great cities; there are uninstructed numbers needing to be taught the way of life, scattered through the rural districts of the land. There is ample room yet for the work of the teacher. (2) Ample teaching material from which to draw. Those who can contribute social rank, or intellectual power, or special religious training, or exceptional spiritual fervour, or even the ordinary knowledge and common zeal of the members of our Christian Churches. There is available on every hand a very large measure of capacity for religious instruction; and this the Christian Church should, like the King of Judah, enlist on behalf of the country. Then may we look for (3) the most excellent results; for a country covered with Christian teachers, and saturated with heavenly truth, will be a nation walking in the fear of God and resting under his smile.—C.

Ver. 16.—*Willing service.* When it is said of Amasiah that he "willingly offered himself unto the Lord," we have a thought conveyed to us respecting the character of a Hebrew general's life, and we have a form of words strikingly suggestive of the true nature of all sacred service. We look at both.

I. THE CHARACTER OF AMASIAH'S SERVICE. By the phrase here employed it was probably meant that he entered upon his work as a captain of Jehoshaphat's army in a spirit of religious devotedness. We need not be surprised at that. The idea of the essential wrongness of war is modern, is Christian. It would not occur to the mind, and would not therefore trouble the conscience, of any man living in that age. There would be no reason, in his mind, why he should not give himself up to the soldier's profession, and go through all military duties of every kind in the spirit of self-surrender to the service of God. And whatever we may think on this subject, we should certainly conclude, and act upon the conviction, that, in determining our course of life, we should seek and find that to which we can give ourselves with religious earnestness. There is no reason why any *profession* should not be a *vocation;* that to which a man feels himself called of God; that in which he may be continually serving God and honouring his Name; that in which he will make every effort to illustrate the essential graces which Jesus Christ has commended to us, both by his words and by his example.

II. AN ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF ALL ACCEPTABLE SERVICE. It must surely be recorded in the "book of life" concerning every heir of heaven, that he "offered himself *willingly* unto the Lord." For what other service than that is worthy of acceptance? 1. The submission and surrender of our will is the act of entrance upon the life which is Divine. It is not knowledge, it is not feeling, it is not compulsory action, or action wrought for recompense, that constitutes true childhood; all of these may exist, and yet there may remain estrangement from God. But however slight be the knowledge, and though emotion be but small, and before any deeds of service have become possible, if a man bows his will to the will of God and resolves to surrender himself to the service of his Saviour, then he has entered the kingdom; he is one of the redeemed of the Lord; his feet are found in the path of life eternal; he has only to go on in the way in which he is walking. 2. Our daily service is excellent and acceptable in proportion to its cheerful willingness. To do the right thing with indeed the consent of our will, but only with a reluctant and struggling acquiescence, places the servant at one end of the scale. To do the right thing with alacrity, with cheerfulness, with earnestness of spirit, with an animating eagerness and abounding joy, places the servant at the other end of the scale of Divine acceptableness, commendation, and reward. "God loves the cheerful giver;" not only the giver of his money, but of his time, of his strength, of his intellectual resources, of all the forces of his soul, of all the opportunities of his life.—C.

Vers. 1—6.—*The accession of Jehoshaphat.* I. THE DATE OF HIS CORONATION. 1. *The thirty-fifth year of his age.* He was thus born in the sixth year of Asa's reign (ch. xvi. 14), during the ten years of quiet. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi (1 Kings xxii. 42). A man of mature years when he ascended the throne, he was better qualified to bear the load of responsibility his father's decease had, in God's providence, cast upon him. 2. *The fourth year of Ahab King of Israel* (1 Kings xxii. 41). If Judah was fortunate in getting such a sovereign as Jehoshaphat, Jeshoshaphat was unfortunate in having such a neighbour as Ahab (1 Kings xvi. 30—33). Man is always more or less influenced by his surroundings, and especially by his neighbours. These, when good, are a blessing; when evil, a curse. In the latter case, if he cannot improve them, they will deteriorate him (ch. xviii. 1).

II. THE RENOWN OF HIS THRONE. The throne: 1. *Of a prosperous kingdom.* Judah, if small, was valiant and religious. Under the preceding reign it had achieved brilliant feats in battle, and advanced considerably on the path of religious reform. 2. *Of a good father.* With all his imperfections, Asa was one of the best of Judah's kings, and it was no slight honour that Jehoshaphat should have descended from and succeeded such a parent. *Noblesse oblige:* it entailed on Jehoshaphat the duty of walking in his father's footsteps as man and king. 3. *Of a famous ancestor.* The throne he ascended had come down from David, the second king of united Israel, in direct and unbroken succession, whereas the throne of Israel had thrice changed dynasties and always for the worse (1 Kings xv. 27; xvi. 10, 22). 4. *Of a great God.* The throne

Jehoshaphat obtained was Jehovah's, and Jehoshaphat was merely his viceroy and representative.

III. THE PRUDENCE OF HIS RULE. 1. *He considered Israel as an enemy.* This was wise. If Baasha had been hostilely disposed towards Judah all the days of his father Asa, Ahab was not likely to be more peacefully inclined. Cautious men should understand the situations in which they are placed. No good can come from mistaking enemies for friends. 2. *He strengthened himself against Israel.* He planted garrisons thoughout Judah and in the cities of Mount Ephraim his father had captured from Baasha (ch. xv. 8), and located forces in all the fenced cities of Judah. "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; the simple pass on, and are punished" (Prov. xxii. 3; xxvii. 12). "The prudent man looketh well to his going" (Prov. xiv. 15), especially when Ahabs are abroad.

IV. THE GREATNESS OF HIS ALLY. Asa had sought a league with Benhadad of Syria (ch. xvi. 2). Jehoshaphat preferred a league with Jehovah (ch. xvii. 3). An ally: 1. *All-powerful,* as his father Asa once believed (ch. xiv. 11), as David had often sung (Ps. lxvi. 3; lxxvi. 6, 7; lxxxix. 8), as Moses had long ago taught (Deut. vii. 21), as Miriam had chanted on the sea-shore (Exod. xv. 3), and as Jehovah himself had once reminded Abraham (Gen. xviii. 14). 2. *Omniscient,* as Hanani the seer had on a memorable occasion told his father (ch. xvi. 9), and as he perhaps remembered, having been then a boy of ten years of age; an ally who could assist in every strait for which his aid was wanted (Prov. xv. 3)—yea, who could detect straits and emergencies in which his aid would be wanted before the individual himself should see them, and who would be forward with reinforcements even before their need was discerned. 3. *Unchanging.* Benhadad broke his league with Baasha (ch. xvi. 4), as doubtless he would have done with Asa had more powerful inducements been offered him by Baasha or another. When Jehovah covenants with his people, he changes not (1 Sam. xv. 29; Ps. cxi. 5; Isa. liv. 10; Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21; Mal. iii. 6). 4. *Gracious.* Benhadad required to be bribed. Jehovah grants his friendship and aid free, stipulating only that they whose ally he becomes shall be true to him (ch. xv. 2). Motley, somewhere in his 'Dutch Republic,' says that when William of Orange was advised to seek the help of European sovereigns in his struggle with Philip of Spain, he replied that he had formed a league with the King of kings.

V. THE QUALITY OF HIS RELIGION. 1. *Personal.* Jehoshaphat as a man, not merely as a monarch, was pious. He, and not only his temple officials, sought Jehovah. Religion nothing, if not personal. Kings as well as subjects are under law to God. 2. *Practical.* Jehoshaphat's piety was not limited to state proclamations, or official acts of homage to Jehovah in the temple, but extended to the domain of his own individual walk. 3. *Ancestral.* It had been the religion of his father Asa and of his renowned ancestor David in their best days, of Asa before he took the first false step in leaving Jehovah for Benhadad, of David before and after he sinned in connection with Bathsheba. 4. *Scriptural.* It was the worship of Jehovah as prescribed by the Law of Moses, and not the service of idols as practised by the northern kingdom; in particular not the adoration of golden calves like those at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings xii. 28). Scripture the only directory of worship for the New Testament Church. 5. *Reformatory.* Not content with abstaining from idolatrous worship, Jehoshaphat abandoned the position of neutrality and compromise his father had occupied (ch. xv. 17); he "took away the high places and groves out of Judah." Neutrality in religion always an impossibility (Josh. xxiv. 15), is less a possibility now than ever (Matt. xii. 30).

VI. THE REWARD OF HIS PIETY. 1. *Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand.* Jehovah had done so to David (2 Sam. v. 12) and to Solomon (1 Kings ii. 46), according to his promise (2 Sam. vii. 12, 13; 1 Kings ix. 5). In continuation of that promise, he now confirms the government of Judah in the hands of their descendant. The only real King-maker and Throne-establisher is God (Prov. viii. 15; Ps. ii. 6; lxi. 6; Hos. xiii. 11). No monarch can keep his crown when God wishes to uncrown him; no throne can be upset until God grants permission to throw it down. 2. *His subjects did him homage by presenting gifts.* (Ver. 5.) Hardly taxes, but free-will offerings over and above, in expression of loyalty and good will, as appears to have been customary on the accession of a king (1 Sam. x. 27). It augurs well for a reign when it begins with God's blessing and the people's favour. No ruler's title is complete, wanting either of these seals. 3. *He had riches and honour in abundance.* This accorded with the promise given to the good man (Ps. cxii. 1—3). God never fails to honour them who honour him (1 Sam. ii. 30), or to enrich, if not with material yet with spiritual treasures, such as serve him with fidelity and fear (Prov. iii. 16; xxii. 4). See this illustrated in the lives of David (1 Chron. xxix. 28), Solomon (1 Kings x. 24, 25, 27; ch. ix. 23, 24), and Hezekiah (ch. xxxii. 7).

VII. THE HAPPINESS OF HIS HEART. This was "lifted up in the ways of the Lord" (ver. 6), not with pride, but: 1. *With inward satisfaction.* True religion diffuses such a feeling through the heart (Ps. cxix. 165; Prov. iii. 17; Isa. xxxii. 17; xlviii. 18). 2. *With earnest resolution.* The elevation of spirit he experienced impelled him to labour for the reformation of his country and the improvement of his people. Sincere piety ever seeks to extend itself. Genuine goodness always aims at doing good to others. Christ commands his followers to do good and communicate (Matt. x. 8).

Learn: 1. The responsibility of high station. 2. The duty of earnestness in religion. 3. The profit of true piety. 4. The joy of godliness.—W.

Vers. 7—9.—*An old Education Act.* I. ITS PROMULGATION. 1. *By whom?* Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa and King of Judah. Kings and parliaments should care for the education of the people. No better means of promoting social order. 2. *When?* In the third year of his reign. Jehoshaphat postponed not a work so excellent, but assigned it a precedence, answering to its importance. Of greater consequence was it for the prosperity of his dominions and the peace of his reign that his subjects should be instructed, than that his armies should be drilled or his garrisons strengthened. 3. *For what end?* The religious improvement of the people. Under the Old Testament economy that formed part of the duty of the Hebrew state, because state and Church were then one. Under the New Testament economy, when state and Church are not coextensive, the obligation to provide religious education for both old and young rests exclusively upon the Church; the furtherance of secular instruction being the department that properly belongs to the state. If, however, the state is not required to directly furnish teaching in religion, it is not at liberty to hinder the Church, but is bound to afford her free scope for discharging the special work committed to her care.

II. ITS CONSTITUTION. 1. *Three orders of teachers.* (1) Laymen of high rank—princes, of whom the names were Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethaneel, and Michaiah, but of whom nothing more is known. If they were "princes" in the sense of being related to the royal family, then to none could the work be more fittingly assigned; if heads of families or fathers' houses, the propriety of appointing them was still more evident; if governors of districts, it was not dimmed. (2) Levites, nine in number—Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, all now equally unknown. (3) Priests, two in number—Elishama and Jehoram. 2. *Three kinds of instruction.* This at least probable from the appointing of three classes of teachers. (1) Civil law, and the constitution of the kingdom, were presumably taught by the laymen. (2) Ritual law, and what pertained to the worship of the temple, by the Levites. (3) Moral law, with the nature and obligation of religion, by the priests. "Thus the nation became thoroughly instructed in their duty to God, to the king, and to each other" (Adam Clarke).

III. ITS OPERATION. It was put in force: 1. *Immediately.* Good resolutions cannot be too soon carried out, or good schemes too quickly set on foot. Quite as many noble projects are ruined by procrastination as by undue haste. 2. *Universally.* The teaching deputies went through the land, visited the cities and villages, and left no part unblessed by their labours. 3. *Earnestly.* They taught the people; not simply opened schools, and read dry and uninteresting lectures on civil, ecclesiastical, and religious history, but saw that the people understood and practised what was taught.

Learn: 1. The true glory of a king—to care for the welfare of his subjects. 2. The value of secular, but especially of religious, instruction. 3. The best spring of prosperity for a people—knowledge of the Law of the Lord. 4. The true function of a teacher—to cause the people to understand. 5. The ultimate end of education—obedience.—W.

Vers. 10—19.—*The greatness of Jehoshaphat.* I. JEHOSHAPHAT'S NEIGHBOURS. 1. *Afraid of his greatness.* As on the cities round Jacob and his sons when they fled from Shechem (Gen. xxxv. 5), the terror of Jehovah was on Jehoshaphat's neighbours. Regarding Jehoshaphat as under the protection of Heaven, they hesitated to try conclusions with him on the field of war. 2. *Solicitous of his favour.* This some sought by means of gifts. The Philistines brought presents and silver of tribute, or "silver a burden," *i.e.* a great quantity (Bertheau, Keil); the Arabians offered flocks—7700 he-goats, and 7700 rams.

II. JEHOSHAPHAT'S BUILDINGS. 1. *Castles, or palaces.* Oriental kings commonly attested their magnificence by temple and palace building; *e.g.* Solomon (ch. viii. 1, etc.). 2. *Store-cities.* Arsenals or magazines for supplying the garrisons. In these Jehoshaphat had much property (Keil).

III. JEHOSHAPHAT'S WARRIORS. 1. *Those who served in Jerusalem.* (1) Their battalions, five—three belonging to Judah, two to Benjamin. (2) Their captains. Of Judah's divisions, Adnah the chief, Jehohanan, and Amasiah the son of Zichri, "who had willingly given or offered himself to the Lord," perhaps in the performance of some mighty deed. Of Benjamin, "Eliada a mighty man of valour," and Jehozabad. (3) Their numbers. Of Judah, under Adnah, 300,000; under Jehohanan, 280,000; under Amasiah, 200,000; in all, 780,000 men. Of Benjamin, 200,000 with Eliada, and 180,000 with Jehozabad; in all, 380,000. For the kingdom 1,160,000, upwards of one million and a half of able-bodied soldiers—a huge incubus for so small a kingdom. (4) Their duties. They waited on the king, *i.e.* were disposable forces at his command, ready to take the field when he should give the word. 2. *Those who served in Judah.* The officers and companies distributed throughout the different garrisons in the land.

Learn: 1. The influence of true religion even on the wicked. 2. The superior glory of good character, as compared with great condition. 3. The dignity implied in being a soldier of Jesus Christ.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII.

This chapter, from its second verse, finds its parallel in 1 Kings xxii. 2—35. It opens with dangerous symptoms, recording in one sentence the event that was to bear ill fruit, if not till "years" afterward (ver. 2), of Jehoshaphat "joining affinity with Ahab." His son Jehoram married Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (ch. xxi. 6). The further steps by which Jehoshaphat became entangled with Ahab are graphically described. He forms an alliance with him in the war with Ramoth-Gilead (vers. 1—3); he urges Ahab to consult "a prophet of the Lord" (vers. 4—12). Ahab unwillingly consents, and receives Micaiah's answer (vers. 13—27); and finally the chapter tells us how Ahab went up to battle, and in battle received his mortal wound (vers. 28—34).

Ver. 1.—The purport of the verse is to let us into the secret that the riches and honour in abundance of Jehoshaphat were, in fact, the snare by which he was led to entangle himself with one who, probably only on that account, was willing to be entangled by *affinity* with *him* (ch. xxi. 6; xxii. 2—4; 2 Kings viii. 25—29). It is not hard to see how they would both lead him, if not always out of big and patronizing thoughts, to seek and also lay him open to be sought. When this verse says Jehoshaphat joined affinity, etc., it means that he *had* done so, to wit, not fewer than nine years before, in promoting or allowing, whichever it was, the marriage of his son Jehoram with Ahab's and Jezebel's daughter Athaliah. For the issue of this marriage, Ahaziah, took the throne at the age of twenty-two years, thirteen years hence from this seventeenth year of his grandfather Jehoshaphat's reign, the year of Ahab's death. But as we are told that Ahaziah was the *youngest* son of Jehoram and Athaliah (for explanation of which see ch. xxi. 17), the "joining affinity" must have been something earlier than nine years, and very probably came yet nearer the prosperity of the earlier years of Jehoshaphat's reign, with which would agree well the keynote touched again significantly here from our ch. xvii. 5. Comp. 2 Kings viii. 17, 26; ch. xxi. 20; xxii. 2 (which needs the correction of *twenty*-two to *forty*-two). Although it is certain that the act of Jehoshaphat was wrong in principle, disastrous in practice (ch. xix. 2, 3), and threatened fatal consequences to himself (ch. xviii. 31, 32), yet it is not impossible to suppose his motives were for the most part good, and he may naturally have thought that the sunshine of his own peace and abundance might be the set time to win influence in and over Israel.

rather than strengthen Israel in its ungodly independence. On the other hand, nothing could justify Jehoshaphat risking such intimacy of relationship with such a family, heedless of consequences, looking towards idolatry, which he should have known were overwhelmingly probable.

Ver. 2.—**After certain years he went down.** In lieu of the italic type "*certain*" here, the English idiom, "years after," would aptly reproduce the facts of the case. This journey to Samaria to see Ahab was made in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat's reign (1 Kings xxii. 51; comp. ch. xx. 35 and 2 Kings iii. 1). What were the precise antecedent circumstances of this visit of Jehoshaphat to Ahab it is interesting to surmise—whether it were the fruit of an invitation direct from Ahab, who had his own designs, or whether it were for diplomatic reasons, that worked in the mind of Jehoshaphat as well as of Ahab, in view of Syria. It is evident that Ahab promptly determined to improve this conference of kings. **Persuaded him**; *i.e.* he took steps to induce him. This is the uniform signification of the word here used in the eighteen times of its occurrence, and mostly in doubtful, or worse than doubtful, matter. The form is the hiph. of סות, in which conjugation only the verb occurs. The Revised Version renders "moved." The visiting and cooperating of Jehoshaphat and Ahab made a novel departure in the history of the rended kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and continued till the time of Jehu. **Ramoth-Gilead.** This important city of Gad (Josh. xx. 8; xxi. 38), in Palestine beyond Jordan, comes into question as one not surrendered to the kingdom of Israel in good faith, according to the promise of Benhadad (1 Kings xx. 34; comp. 1, 4, 7, 11, 20, 30, 33), Benhadad's father having taken it from Omri, father of Ahab. For "all the might that he showed," and presumably in conflicts with Syria, Omri was evidently a heavy loser. *Ramoth-Gilead* means "the heights of Gilead."

Ver. 3.—**I am as thou, etc.** The same unqualified kind of language was used by Jehoshaphat on another occasion (2 Kings iii. 7), two years later, when Jehoram, son of the deceased Ahab, also asked his help against Moab. Whether on the one occasion or the other, it is quite possible that Jehoshaphat thought he was serving common interests, and the cause of his own kingdom, as well as of Israel; nevertheless "Jehu the son of Hanani the seer" ignores the supposed justification (ch. xix. 2).

Ver. 4.—The wording of this verse is identical with that of the parallel (1 Kings xxii. 5). Jehoshaphat, if even not quite conscious of it, is throwing some sop to his conscience in essaying to become, and posing as, the godly counsellor of "the ungodly" (ch. xix. 2). At any rate, his counsel is right, even to the point of urging to-day, and significantly deprecating procrastination. It is not, however, so clear that he was, in the first instance, as decided in respect of the necessity of inquiring the will of the Lord at the mouth of a true prophet, in distinction from a prophet merely of Israel, though they should be "four hundred" in number! Compare the following two verses, however, which show as though he was holding himself quite prepared and on the look-out for the expected occasion of having to rein Ahab up!

Ver. 5.—**These four hundred prophets,** as Keil justly notes, were not prophets of Asherah, nor of Baal, but strictly of Israel, *i.e.* of the images of the calf (1 Kings xii. 26—33). Their *word* speedily showed itself *not* the *word of the Lord*, but the word that was made up to order of the king, and to suit his known wish at any time.

Ver. 6.—The Revised Version well arranges the words of this verse, "Is there not here besides a prophet of the Lord?" The conscience of Ahab successfully made a coward of him, that he took so quietly this pronounced slight put on his kingdom's prophets (*prophetæ vitulorum*) by his brother-king Jehoshaphat!

Ver. 7.—**The same is Micaiah.** This true prophet of the Lord is known only here in recorded history, but it is evident he was otherwise well known to his generation and to Ahab (ver. 25). The outspokenness of Ahab and the sustained courtesy of Jehoshaphat are alike agreeable to notice in this verse.

Ver. 9.—The contents of this and the following two verses narrate either what had already taken place, or the continuation of the scene that had not come to its end, but had been interrupted in order to carry out fully the urgent exhortation of Jehoshaphat "to-day," so that Ahab sent at once there and then a messenger for Micaiah. Any way, the unreal prophets have their full opportunity and their say at least twice over, as also Micaiah below (vers. 14, 16, 18—22, 27). **A void place**; *i.e.* a level floor; Revised Version, *an open place.* The Hebrew word designates often just a "threshing-floor," גֹּרֶן; but quite possibly here, a recognized court at the gate of the city, used for judgment, is intended.

Ver. 10.—**Zedekiah** (named son of Chenaanah to distinguish him from some now unknown contemporary, or, perhaps, because the father was in some way distinguished) was one of those who *knew* the truth, nor feared to put it on his lips at the very time that his life did not incorporate it (Deut. xxxiii. 17). For other particulars of him, borrowed from the doubtfulness of Josephus, see Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' iii. 1836. **Had made him horns of iron.** It would seem as though Zedekiah had made these "horns of iron" at some *previous* time, or, perhaps, now simulated some very rough presentation of horns of an impromptu kind. The horns were the symbol of power, and the iron of a power invincible.

Ver. 12.—This verse bespeaks very clearly the rotten condition of Church and state, prophets and king and "officers" (ver. 8).

Ver. 14.—This first reply of Micaiah, given in the latter half of the verse, does not stand for untruth or deceit, but for very thinly veiled, very thinly disguised, very keen taunt and reproof. It has been well described as the ironical echo of the language of the unreal prophets. Micaiah begins by answering a fool according to his folly, *i.e.* according to his own heart's desire. He had just come from some place of imprisonment or punishment (ver. 25). And he so spoke or so looked that the king should know he had not spoken his last word in answer to the inquiry addressed to him.

Ver. 16.—The brief parable smote the very heart of Ahab (Numb. xxvii. 17); and Ahab felt it, like "the sentence of death" in him, in a way all different, indeed, from that in which an apostle of many a century afterward felt it.

Ver. 17.—Ahab's language in this verse shows that, though he had adjured Micaiah, he did not wish to seem to believe that he could speak anything but his own temper.

Ver. 19.—Who shall entice, etc.? Hebrew piel future פַּתֶּה. This and the following three verses must have told, manifestly *did* tell, with fearful force of faithful preaching, upon the unreal prophets and the wicked king. How it was that their contents did not avail with Jehoshaphat to throw full energy again into his conscience, and to enable him to break at once with Ahab and his expedition, is inexplicable (and the more as it was his own pressing suggestion that the true prophet should be summoned), except as another illustration of the fearful difficulty that lies so often to human weakness, in the way of retracing a false step. Both these visions (vers. 16, 18—22) well illustrate how God revealed his truth, will, and specific messages to his true prophets *in vision*. The vision of the throne, grand in all the majesty of its simplicity, of the psalmists (ix., xi., xlv., ciii.), of Isaiah (vi. 1—5), of Ezekiel (i. 26), of Daniel (vii. 9), of Stephen (Acts vii. 56), of St. John (Rev. iv. 2), is part of heaven's own stamp of authentication of the Bible.

Ver. 22.—The vision culminating as regards its practical object in this verse is Micaiah's bold explanation of how it comes to pass that he has to bear the brunt of Ahab's "hate," on account of the uniformly unfavourable character of his answers to him, instead of four hundred other men sharing it with him. He declares, on the authority of his rapt vision, that it is because *they* are possessed by a lying spirit (Rom. i. 25, 28; 1 Thess. ii. 12). And, like the true prophet of all time, he declares it at all hazards and at all cost.

Ver. 23.—**Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?** This question of Zedekiah, and Micaiah's answer to him in the following verse, are both obscure and of doubtful interpretation, but their drift not at all so. Keil and Bertheau correctly say,—in that Zedekiah used the force and the language that he did, it is not a bad sign that he was under a spirit's influence, but in that it was *physical* force which he used in a moral subject, this was a conclusive sign of the *character* of the spirit that he was amenable to. Among many possible suggestions as to the exact meaning of the question, "Which way," etc.? it is possible that a sceptical taunt best explains Zedekiah's words, and that he meant that he did not believe the Spirit of the Lord went *any* way to Micaiah. He will not yield to a doubt or to a suspicion thrown upon it that the Spirit had been with himself, and he will fain throw great doubt, whether he had proceeded from him to Micaiah!

Ver. 24.—So also, probably, this verse would purport to tell us beforehand distinctly what is not told after the issue of the battle and Ahab's death, that Zedekiah and his co-prophets did what they could, however vainly, to hide and to elude the vengeance of Jezebel (1 Kings xx. 30; xxii. 25; 2 Kings ix. 2).

Ver. 25.—**Carry him back.** The last of these three words tells, of course, its own tale, of what had already been the treatment accorded to Micaiah. **Amon the governor . . . Joash the king's son.** This latter person is found only here and in the parallel, and the designation given him probably does not intend a personal relationship to the king, but an official; so see again ch. xxviii. 7; and note the conjunction again of the governor of the house, in the next clause. The Vulgate translates the Hebrew for "the king's," as though it were a proper name, "Amelech." See also Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' under the name "Maaseiah" 17. Nor is *Amon the governor* known elsewhere except in the parallel (1 Kings xxii. 26), but these designations, as through some chinks, throw a little scanty light into the subject of the internal administration at this time of the kingdom of Israel. In this kingdom subsequent to the separation, decentralization seems to have been carried to a further point than in Judah, and considering its greater extent, its far inferior metropolitan force, its double place of worship and sacrifice, these largely idolatrous, and in all this the undoubted degraded authority of its central government, this is very explainable. It is true that in both kingdoms history speaks equally of such offices and officers as were distinctly military or looked that way, but it can scarcely be without a reason that for the numerous allusions in Israel (1 Kings xvi. 8—10; xviii. 3; xx. 7; xxi. 7—13; 2 Kings i. 8—17; iii. 6; x. 5) to councils of elders (well known before the disruption), and governors of palaces, of cities, of houses, and of provinces, there is scarcely one in the records of Judah. Here possibly enough the executive would be more vigorous, more compact, and more direct and close in its action from headquarters, while in both divisions of what should have been the one kingdom, royalty was by profession constitutional, and in its devolution hereditary.

Ver. 26.—Only the slightest differences are noticeable between this verse and the parallel, this latter using the sign of the objective case (which in this instance would probably lend some contemptuousness of expression), and using the word "come" instead of return.

Ver. 27.—The courage and fidelity of Micaiah, in not deserting either his prophet-message or his prophet-Master, are admirable, and for his determined appeal to all the people, which was made in the very face of the king or kings, see again Micah i. 2.

Ver. 28.—It must remain doubtful which of the kings carried with him the uneasier heart. What Jehoshaphat might have gained in less element of personal and physical fear, he by rights should have lost in sensitiveness of conscience.

Ver. 29.—Ahab does not seem disposed to lose anything again for want of asking, and even vouchsafing apparently (but it is exceedingly likely that this arises from our failing to appreciate exactly the force of the Hebrew forms in the text) to use the tone of directing, to his brother-king of the better part and kingdom. It must be presumed that there was something to relieve Ahab's language of the barefaced disregard for the safety of Jehoshaphat and regard for his own, which lie on the surface of the words he uses. Quite possibly, for instance, *both* knew that Ahab was to be *the* mark of the shooters. Also Ahab's disguise may have meant a heavy price to pay to his pride, while Jehoshaphat's dignity was saved intact. So, too, Ahab may have merely purported to say, "You can, without any special risk, wear your royal apparel; but I," etc.

Ver. 30.—**Our had commanded** stands rendered in the parallel not so explicitly "commanded," but in both cases the Hebrew text is the same (צִוָּה). Therefore, if the place of vers. 29, 30 were inverted, what reads like the cool suggestion of Ahab in ver. 29 would seem more tolerable. Meantime, Benhadad's command argues the intensity of his resentment towards Ahab, and not less ungrateful forgetfulness for the ultimate consideration that Ahab had allowed to him (1 Kings xx. 31—34).

Ver. 31.—Comparing this and following verse minutely with the parallel (1 Kings xxii. 32, 33), the exact correspondence of the latter of each pair of verses only the more clearly points the significance belonging to the two clauses of foreign matter interposed so characteristically by the writer of Chronicles for his own unvarying special objects, viz. **the Lord helped him; and God moved them.** What the cry of Jehoshaphat was remains uncertain; whether a cry to his own body-guard and soldiers, or a cry to those who were beginning "to compass him about as bees," to let them know at any rate that he was not the king they sought, or whether most improbably, a cry to the Lord is meant. The cry fulfilled its purpose, and if Jehoshaphat *had* a sneaking love for Ahab (see the significant "love them," etc., of Jehu in second verse of next chapter), he evidently had not any idea of needlessly dying for him. The happy distinction of perceiving in next verse, as compared with seeing in this verse, is not warranted by the Hebrew text (in both cases כִּרְאוֹת), though it is by the gist of the connection and English idiom.

Ver. 33.—**At a venture;** Hebrew, לְתֻמּוֹ; i.e. "in his *innocence*." The root is the familiar root expressive of uprightness, perfectness, simplicity, and the meaning here is that the shooter was innocent of what a distinguished deed he was doing, of the personality of the man at whom he aimed (for it is not necessary to suppose his shot was quite at random), and of the skill that gave the arrow to reach its ultimate destiny. **Between the joints of the harness;** literally, *between the joints and the harness*, i.e. that part called the breastplate. The arrow went through, or by the side of one of the actual articulations of the armour-mail worn. Ahab's direction to the chariot-driver at the spur of the first wounded moment to turn and carry him out of the host, was evidently qualified, when he found that the wound was not immediately fatal. As the heat of the battle grew, and victory did not at once turn one way or the other, he was the more anxious to give the moral support of his presence to the last to his army, and, unable to stand by himself, he was supported by his

own orders (so our rendering is not inconsistent with that in the parallel "*was stayed*" (1 Kings xxii. 35) in the chariot till he died in the evening. Although the spirit of Ahab, and his fidelity to his own army, kingdom, and self, cannot but appear to advantage in these last incidents of his unworthy life, yet it is probable that they find their record here for the sake of giving clear statement to the fact, that in the chariot his life-blood collected according to the saying of the parallel (ver. 35 compared with ver. 38). Note, therefore, particularly the truncated history of the writer of Chronicles in this instance. He, no doubt, consciously omitted, and with a purpose, his own usual purpose; but light is lost, and the cross light tends rather to misleading, except for that only correct user of Scripture, which teaches us to compare one Scripture with another. and balance one part against another—a thing easy to do in matters of fact, but too often forgotten in the weightier matter of doctrine. Here our eighteenth chapter closes, less the mention of the proclamation for the self-disbanding of Ahab's army (ver. 36 of the parallel chapter) which should fulfil the prophecy of our ver. 16, and less any mention of Ahab's burial, of the washing of his chariot in the pool of Samaria, of the dogs licking up of the blood there, and of his ivory house, etc. (vers. 37—40 of the parallel chapter). All of which omittings accord well with the one clear ecclesiastical and religious intent of the Chronicles, in place of the pursuit of matters of general and merely graphic historic interest, however charged with instruction they too might be.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—34.—*The second chapter in Jehoshaphat's career.* This chapter opens with the statement of a fact that portends no good—the "affinity" which Jehoshaphat "joined with Ahab," the King of Israel. This came to pass in the incident of the marriage of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, with Athaliah, daughter of Ahab. Eight years, or a little more, and it seems to bear no evil fruit; but, if so, it was only that it was taking its time to form and ripen, and now too surely is found. Clusters of lessons in this chapter gather round the names of—

I. JEHOSHAPHAT. They *now,* unfortunately, all *depend from* that one false position in which he had involved himself and his family with Ahab and *his* family. 1. Jehoshaphat has become undoubtedly *the leading man,* and is proportionately exposed to the dangers inherent in, *inseparably* inherent in, being courted—courted by attentions, by flattery, by luxurious entertainment, by being appealed to for his opinion on great questions, and tacitly treated as arbiter in high questions of state. 2. He must repay these, if possible, in *somewhat* similar coin, and must use *large* language, speak after the manner of an entangling generosity (ver. 3), and, before he knows what he means, commit himself to something dangerously near a promise. 3. *After* this promise, instead of before it, he admonishes the man who is in fact a rival king to inquire "the word of the Lord," and has to wince under the notorious humiliation of listening to the report of four hundred men, well known for false prophets! 4. He has to save, if not his credit, the bare necessities of the truth, by asking for a *true* prophet, "a prophet *of the Lord,*" without, as it would appear, one word of blank and flat denunciation of *Ahab's* troop of prophets, and with only the mildest deprecation (ver. 7) of Ahab's unqualified assertion that he "hates" the true man, and with utter ignoring and neglect of the favourable opportunity of asking how it may be supposed to have come to pass that the true man "never has prophesied good, but always evil unto" Ahab. Yes, but the inconvenience was that he was a guest in *his* house, and a guest sumptuously entertained and most deferentially treated. 5. He has a long sitting's humiliation, when, clothed in his royal robes, he sat, throne by throne, with Ahab, to see "the prophet of the Lord," Micaiah; to hear his parables, every word of which he knew to be truth; to witness the horror of that true prophet being "smitten on the cheek" of the false, and the royal honour of the Lord God proportionately disparaged; to observe the meek forbearance of Micaiah in his reply; and, to crown all, his sentence and relegation to a bread-and-water imprisonment by Ahab. It ought to have been a long day of torture for the king of the true line of David! 6. Lastly, though it is impossible to doubt that he was in possession of the true state of the whole case, Jehoshaphat has to go on to the end. He *does* the thing that is wrong (ch. xix. 2); he seems, at last, to be *obeying* Ahab rather than to lead him—going into battle and, at his suggestion, clothed for a target for the archers—till the undignified cry to be spared is wrung from his lips, because he would have it known he is Jehoshaphat, and not Ahab! All this was dangerously close steering for the conscience; it brought upon him the distinct reproof and very forcibly expressed condemnation of the seer Hanani, so soon as ever he reached Jerusalem; and all was occasioned by his being dragged on, step by step, in a wrong course from the position, originally a false one, in which he had placed himself.

II. AHAB. Things are very near their end for Ahab. The view is that of a man using up to the best advantage the last of his wits, which he had of long time trusted to his disadvantage, which long time had led him wrong, and were now rapidly going to lead him to the fatal end. We notice: 1. How he prepared the way by lavish entertainment of the King of Judah and his retinue, in order to utilize the opportunity to persuade him, apparently, to pass his word "to go up to Ramoth-Gilead," but certainly to pass an opinion favourable to doing so. 2. How immediately he acceded to the proposal of Jehoshaphat that the Lord should be inquired of, but *as immediately* repaired to and summoned "his" own "prophets" (ver. 21). 3. How the force of circumstances extracted from him a faithful statement of the true state of his feelings towards the true prophet (ver. 7). 4. How the "officer," or "messenger," sent to bring Micaiah quickly, did his endeavour, no doubt at the instigation of Ahab, to pervert (vers. 12, 13) the testimony which Micaiah should give, but vainly. 5. How certainly he detected the *consequent* sarcasm, the veiled compliance of Micaiah (vers. 14, 15), and the rather drew out more fully all the thing as it was from Micaiah, but as *he did not want* to have it, or to have it uttered! 6. How the wicked action of one of his false prophets suited him *exactly* (vers. 23—25), and bridged the way both to satisfy his own resentment and to put a fair face on the position in the presence of Jehoshaphat. He was, perhaps, trembling all the while lest Jehoshaphat, hearing and seeing all, should have summoned up the moral courage to have done just the thing which he ought to have done, and withdrawn altogether from the enterprise, or from all association with Ahab in it! 7. Lastly, how Ahab entered the battle-field, ill at ease, *dishonouring* himself by *disguising* himself, and with too sure a presage of what was in store for him; and the prophecy of Elijah found its fulfilment (1 Kings xxi. 19).

III. THE FALSE PROPHETS. These, wherever found, are the prophets who seek to please man; who would divine, a task only too easy, what man wishes them to say. In this case they are emphatically called, on the highest authority (vers. 21, 22), *Ahab's* prophets, *not* those of the Lord. Unfaithfulness in the professed teaching of religion *never* does anything better than lets through those who accept it. The anger and intemperateness of that one of the false prophets who had been most demonstrative, most dramatic (vers. 10, 23), are much to be noticed—noticed as marking, as measuring the *personal* feeling and, in a word, the very *temper* which should be most utterly absent from the true messenger of God, of his truth, and his will.

IV. THE ONE BLAMELESS, BEAUTIFUL, AND EVEN TYPICAL FIGURE OF THE TRUE PROPHET. He was already, it appears, a marked man, and, had it been possible, *marked down* by King Ahab. We notice: 1. When all pressure was put on him, and he knew very well what it meant, that he asserted the inviolability of his duty—absolute fidelity to his instructions! 2. We must notice the deep knowledge imparted to him of human nature; how to touch it at its root; how to gain *effectively* its ear under the most favourable circumstances; how, in the presence of such, even to *enlarge* its own opportunity for exposition of the truth (vers. 14—22). The parable, as we may call it, of the sheep on the mountains without a shepherd, and the vision of the council of heaven, or in heaven, which had been vouchsafed to Micaiah,—what tales they tell to all those who now are listening to him! *One* against not fewer than four hundred and two! The plainness, the point, the forcibleness, and the fearlessness of his utterance are all the perfection of the true prophet. For *us*, too, this passage most instructively illustrates the method, or *one* of the methods, by which prophet and seer of old *saw* and then announced the real revelations of heaven to earth. 3. But the perfection of the true prophet is yet more intrinsically present in the forbearingness, the patient suffering, the not returning railing for railing, "the fellowship of sufferings" with the One Prophet; as Micaiah was "smitten on the cheek," as he was "thrust into prison," as he was "fed with the bread and water of affliction," as he uttered no provoking word nor murmured, because of the consequences to himself, of his faithful ministry. The day that was fateful and fatal to the wicked king Ahab, who now filled up the measure of his iniquity; that was dismay, confusion, exposure, to four hundred false prophets; that, alas! tarnished even the history and character of Jehoshaphat—was the day in which the blameless Micaiah "shone forth as the sun in the firmament of heaven."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Temporal advancement and spiritual decline.* Writing the biography of Jehoshaphat from a purely religious standpoint, another conjunction than the one used might well have been employed. It might well be written, "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, *but* joined affinity with Ahab." For the latter clause affirms that on which we can by no means congratulate the king. Yet such is the common course of things; such is the bent of the human mind and the way that circumstances usually take, that the simple connective "and" is perhaps the more natural of the two. This close association deliberately entered upon between the servant of Jehovah and the devotee of Baal is human enough. The man who has become strong, according to all earthly measurements, seeks to become stronger still, not considering what care he is taking or is neglecting of his deeper and his higher interests. We look at—

I. THE COMMONNESS OF THIS COURSE. How true it is that "much wants more;" that the exchequer never seems full enough to the man who is amassing wealth, nor the rank high enough to him who is pursuing honour, nor the authority great enough to him who is striving after power! Men eat of earthly food and are the hungrier for their feasting. They have "abundance of riches and honour," but they will not be satisfied without that fascinating alliance; they must "join affinity with Ahab." Let no man imagine that when he has reached a certain height of worldly advancement he will be satisfied and will crave nothing more. He will most certainly find that, when he reaches that desired point, he will long to stand on the height that will be still beyond him. And the evil of it is that this thirst for more worldly good is something which so often displaces a nobler longing, a craving for more of goodness and of fellowship with God. It even affects and injures the spirit to such a degree that it positively *lessens* that better longing, until it is reduced to almost nothing.

II. THE GRAVE UNWISDOM OF IT. What did Jehoshaphat gain by this alliance with the house of Ahab? A measurable, momentary gratification. What did he lose by it? An immeasurable, permanent good. The mistake he then made was one the effects of which stretched far, very far forwards, and affected for evil many hundreds of households beside his own (ch. xxi. 4). What do we gain by adding something more to our material prosperity—another thousand pounds to our fortune; another honour to our titles; another position to our acquirement? Something truly, but something the worth of which is quite measurable; possibly very small, as an increase to our life-happiness. But if we are neglecting our higher interests, if we are allowing those sacred obligations to be relaxed, if we are departing from God, what do we lose? Who shall estimate the value of the favour and friendship of Jesus Christ, of the integrity of our Christian character, of the excellency and blessedness of holy usefulness, of that brighter and broader sphere which would have been ours, if we had not let earthly and human interests weigh down and press out the higher and the heavenly ones?

III. ITS GUILT. As God multiplies his gifts to us, of whatever kind those gifts may be, we ought to be thereby more closely attached to him and to be more heartily devoted to his service. When we permit increase of substance or added honour to lead us away from him, we are as guilty as we are unwise; our sin is as sad as our folly.—C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Spiritual unwariness.* When Jehoshaphat came into contact with Ahab, he encountered a man who was more than his match in respect of policy. Indeed, he may be said to have fallen readily into the trap which his neighbour laid for him. Ahab received him as his guest with ostentatious hospitality; and when Jehoshaphat was in a grateful and perhaps elated mood, he proposed a combination in which they were to share the risks and losses, but not to divide the gains. To this the King of Judah unwisely consented. The "offensive alliance" was a mistake on his part. Simple straightforwardness needs to be flanked with some wariness or natural sagacity, otherwise it may lead us into compromising and even ruinous situations. In the conduct of our life, it is of very great importance that we should not show unwariness in—

I. THE FORMATION OF OUR FRIENDSHIPS. Jehoshaphat did an unwise thing in forming a friendship with Ahab; intimacy with such a man could not possibly end in his own elevation. We should not "love them that hate the Lord" (see homily on ch. xix. 2). In nothing is it more needful to show wariness and wisdom than in the choice of our friends; a mistake here means bitter disappointment, unimaginable misery, and, in all likelihood, spiritual deterioration if not positive ruin. Be slow to bind this bond of friendship, which may, indeed, be a link to every good thing that blesses us, but which may be a fetter that chains us to every bad thing that curses and degrades us.

II. THE ENCOUNTERING OF SOCIAL PERILS. Whether or not Jehoshaphat suffered from the blandishments and allurements of the court where Jezebel was queen, we do not know. Certainly he ought to have thought twice before he exposed himself and his attendants to that serious peril. How much of social peril can we meet and master? That is a question which every man must answer for himself. But it is clear that a very large number of human souls have overestimated their capacity for resistance. The degenerating influences of a society which is not Christian, but worldly, or vicious, are a power which we must only encounter with the utmost circumspection. We may take counsel here of Ahab himself (1 Kings xx. 11). Men go airily and easily to the contest with those social forces, and they come out of the conflict worsted and wounded, perhaps even unto death. Be wary here, for you stand in a "slippery place."

III. THE UNDERTAKING OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS. Very readily, to all appearance, Jehoshaphat acceded to Ahab's proposal (ver. 2). But it was one involving himself, his family, his princes, and his people in great hazards. Syria was a power not at all to be despised, and, except the Lord appeared on their behalf, they would most likely be defeated. And what reason had Jehoshaphat to conclude that he would have the arm of Jehovah on his side when he was going hand-in-hand with such a man as Ahab? It was a very doubtful procedure; and the haste with which it was agreed upon showed no sagacity at all. Before we adopt our neighbour's proposal we should weigh well all its probable and, so far as we can tell, its possible consequences; and not those which affect ourselves only, but those also which affect our kindred and connections. We may go "with a light heart" into an enterprise that means nothing less than disaster. Before undertaking anything of importance, there should be (1) careful consideration, looking at the subject from all points of view; (2) consultation with the wise and good; (3) prayer for Divine guidance.

IV. THE REGULATION OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE. Some men leave the retention of their spiritual integrity almost wholly to their good impulses. But this is a rash and perilous course. It is, indeed, the foolish and often fatal absence of all method. He who has the wariness which is wisdom, will adopt and maintain carefully regulated habits of devotion and of self-culture.—C.

Ver. 4.—*Inquiring of the Lord.* We are not at all surprised that Jehoshaphat did not wish to risk the chances of a great battle without "inquiring at the word of the Lord." For it was with him as it should be with us—

I. A WISE AND HOLY HABIT to seek a knowledge of God's mind, and the supreme advantage of his direction. Not, indeed, that he *invariably* asked in this admirable spirit. If we may judge from the silence of Scripture, he had hurried into this questionable partnership without any such reverent solicitude (see preceding homily). Nevertheless, as a devout servant of Jehovah, he was accustomed to consult the Divine will; and it was, no doubt, a strong feeling that he must not depart from this good habit on so great an occasion that prompted him to ask of Ahab what that king would most willingly have dispensed with. It should be our constant custom, our fixed habit of life, to inquire of God concerning everything we propose to ourselves to do; and more particularly respecting the greater events of life on which large issues hang. For who are we that we should lean unto or upon "our own understanding"? How few of all possible considerations can we take into our mind! How impossible for us to give the proper weight to those which are the more grave and serious! How short a way can we look into the future, and how unable we are to foretell what other factors, now out of sight, will come into play! How continually our greatest sagacity must prove to be but childish simplicity in the sight of him who sees everything at a glance! How wise, therefore, to form the habit of continually inquiring of God, of seeking Divine guidance at every stage and even at every step of our human life!

II. THE RARE PRIVILEGE for which we may not look. Jehoshaphat wished to know, not only whether God was willing for him to go up to the battle, but also that he would return victorious. He believed that he might gain, not only the instruction, but the information he desired. Now, it is not at all certain that God never gives his people intimation of coming events in our own time; the evidence is rather the other way. But we may not look for Divine predictions as the ordinary and regular thing. Certainty concerning the event would probably have an unfavourable effect on the duty and the struggle *before* the event. It is, on the whole, best for us not to know what the issue will be; best for us to act as if the result were hanging on our own fidelity. The "long result" we do know, and rejoice to foresee: it nerves us for action; it sustains us in misfortune and temporary defeat. But as to the immediate issue we are best left in uncertainty.

III. THE PROMISE WE MAY PLEAD, AND THE HOPE WE MAY CHERISH. (Ps. xxx. 10; cxxi.; Prov. iii. 6; Isa. lviii. 11; Matt. vii. 7—11; Heb. xiii. 6.) If we are walking in the fear of God, and are his children reconciled to him in Jesus Christ, then we may continually ask and confidently expect (1) his guidance at the outset, and (2) his help all through the work we have undertaken, the duty we are discharging, the burden we are bearing. Reverently, intelligently, obediently, God "will be inquired of" by those who love and serve him.—C.

Vers. 6—27.—*Speaking for God.* We may take Micaiah as the type of the true prophet, *i.e.* of the man who *speaks for God;* he is not merely the man who has a vision of the future—that is the smaller part of his function; he is the one who is charged with a Divine message, and who faithfully delivers it, however it may be received. Thus regarding him, we learn that the spokesman for God must be—

I. UNCONCERNED ABOUT NUMBERS. There may be "four hundred men" on one side (ver. 5), and only one on the other; or see 1 Kings xviii. 19. The prophet of the Lord may be in a most honourable but most decisive minority, but he must not consider that. "Truth cannot be put to the vote" and carried by a majority. Many a time it has been overwhelmingly outnumbered, and yet ultimately triumphant. We must not count heads when we undertake to speak for the Eternal. "A man with truth on his side can never be in a smaller minority than Almighty God and himself."

II. INACCESSIBLE TO HUMAN BLANDISHMENTS. The messenger that summoned Micaiah and attended him to the king seems to have employed his opportunity in trying to persuade the prophet to give a pleasant and courtly answer (ver. 12). He did not succeed. Many times have men sought to tamper with the ministers of the truth; sometimes they have succeeded. But when they have done so, there has been a lamentable failure. "We seek not yours, but you;" "If I pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ." These are the sentiments and this is the spirit of the true prophet. No human whisper in the ear as he goes before his audience will make him change one word or tone in the message he delivers from his Master.

III. FEARLESS OF HUMAN AUTHORITY. Micaiah had caused Jehoshaphat to "hate" him (ver. 7); and once again he drew upon him the king's resentment. There were two kings now present, arrayed in royal apparel and seated on thrones (ver. 9); there was much in the position to constrain a deliverance that would answer to their known wishes; but Micaiah was unmoved by fear. He acted as honourably and as heroically as if he had witnessed the example and heard the exhortation of the Lord himself (Luke xii. 4, 5). To be condemned of man is a small thing when we are commended and honoured of God. We can afford to incur the hatred even of kings when we rest in the loving favour of our heavenly Father.

IV. UNMOVED BY ILL TREATMENT. Micaiah responded to Zedekiah in a spirit that showed no shade of submission or withdrawal (ver. 23); and when the vexed and passionate king ordered him to be imprisoned and fed with the bread and water of affliction, he still manifested a fearless spirit, totally unmoved by the ill usage he was receiving (ver. 27). The minister of Christ, who is (or should be) the successor of the Hebrew prophet, will not use the language or cherish the spirit of retaliation, but he will be utterly undisturbed in his aim and in his purpose by any unjust or unkind treatment he may receive. Nothing of this kind will move him from his resolve, will turn him from his high and noble task. Acting under the inspiration of God, and conscious that he is "partaking of the afflictions of Christ," the "bread and water of affliction" will be sweet to his taste. In that day he will "rejoice and be exceeding glad" (Matt. v. 10—12).

V. WHOLLY ATTENTIVE TO THE DIVINE VOICE. "Even what my God saith, that will I speak" (ver. 13). So spoke the faithful witness. One greater far than he described himself as "a Man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God" (John viii. 40). What has God said to us that we can tell our brethren? What do we learn of Christ and in his service? What do we read in his Word, by a careful, reverent, and intelligent study of it? What sacred lessons have we gleaned, as his holy providence has led and his Divine discipline has taught and trained us? *This*, nothing else and nothing less, will we carry to the minds of men, to redeem them from sin, to succour them in sorrow, to prepare them for the burden and battle of life, to make them ready for the time of judgment and the long day of eternity.—C.

Vers. 28—34.—*The true lesson of human ignorance.* What are the true lessons that we gather from this interesting episode? There may be suggested—

I. TWO THOUGHTS WHICH ARE SPECIOUS BUT FALSE. Some men would probably infer from similar facts happening in the range of their own observation: 1. That the issue of events is in the hands of an irreversible *fate*. Ahab (they would argue) was bound to fall that day; do what he might, disguise himself as he pleased, take whatever precaution he could, his death was decreed and was simply unavoidable. But this is not the wise, nor is it the right, way of regarding it. Had he been as brave as Jehoshaphat (see ver. 29), he certainly would not have fallen *in the way he did*; had he been as true to Jehovah as the King of Judah was, and as he might and should have been, he would not have "gone up to Ramoth-Gilead" at all, for he would have been dissuaded by the prophet of the Lord, and he would not have fallen at all. His death that day, as well as that way, was due to his own course and to his own choice. Our destiny is not in the hands of some inexorable necessity; it resides in our own character; it is the work of our own will. 2. That many things, if not most things, are decided not by choice, but by chance. The death of Ahab (they would say) was the result of "a bow drawn at a venture." And it is this chance-work that has a very large share in the determination of our whole earthly history. But chance, in the sense of positive lawlessness, does not exist. Everything happened here according to law. The soldier drew his bow according to his instruction, aiming at the enemy, though not at any one whom he recognized in particular; the arrow went on its career according to the laws of motion, and did its work on Ahab's person in accordance with all the laws of physics. There was no violation of law in the smallest degree, though something happened which no man could have calculated and predicted. If we succeed, it will be by using the laws of health, of prosperity, etc.; if we fail, it will be in consequence of our disregarding these laws, which are laws of God. Chance will neither make nor mar us.

II. TWO THOUGHTS WHICH ARE BOTH TRUE AND SERVICEABLE. 1. *That we do not know what harm we do* by our most casual strokes. We "draw a bow at a venture," we "send an arrow through the air;" it is only a sentence, it is a very simple deed, we think; but it hits and wounds a sensitive human heart; it may even slay a soul. It may cause such grief as we would on no account have inflicted if we could have foreseen it; it may lead to the first declension of a valuable human life, and may end in such spiritual disaster as it would grieve us indeed to originate. 2. *That we cannot tell what good we do* by our simplest efforts. Little did the Syrian soldier suppose that by that shot of his arrow he was to serve his royal master as he did. It is a most cheering and inspiring thought that we cannot tell what kind or measure of good we are effecting by our everyday service of our Lord. A kindly smile, a gracious recognition, an encouraging word, a neighbourly kindness, a warning utterance, the taking of "a class," the giving of "an address," the conduct of "a service," perhaps under the humblest roof, or to the most unpromising audience, may prove to be a most valuable contribution to the cause of Jesus Christ, to the service of mankind.—C.

Vers. 1—3.—*The false steps of a good king.* I. AN UNFORTUNATE ALLIANCE. Jehoshaphat joins affinity with Ahab (ver. 1). This refers to the marriage of Jehoram his son with Athaliah, Ahab's daughter (ch. xxi. 6), eight or nine years before. The date may be approximately determined thus. Athaliah's son ascended the throne of Judah at the age of twenty-two (2 Kings viii. 26), not forty-two (ch. xxii. 2). But Jehoram his father reigned eight years (ch. xxi. 5; 2 Kings viii. 17). Hence the fourteen years leading back to Ahaziah's birth must have been the last fourteen of the reign of Jehoshaphat. Since, then, Jehoshaphat reigned twenty-five years (1 Kings xxii. 42), Ahaziah's birth must have happened in the eleventh year of Jehoshaphat's and the fifteenth of Ahab's reign (1 Kings xxii. 41). But Ahab reigned twenty-two years (2 Kings xvi. 29). Hence the interval between Ahaziah's birth and Ahab's death must have been at least seven years. The wedding, therefore, of Jehoram and Athaliah may be set down eight or nine years prior to Jehoshaphat's visit to Samaria. The alliance that wedding represented was the first wrong step Jehoshaphat took. It was: 1. *Unnecessary.* (1) Not required by the safety of the state. The army that, with no ally but God (ch. xiv. 12), had defeated Zerah's million of soldiers, could hardly stand in need of succour from the son of Omri. In league with Jehovah (ch. xvii. 3), Jehoshaphat should have reckoned himself dispensed from the necessity of seeking other confederate (Rom. viii. 31; 1 John iv. 4). (2) Not demanded by the glory of his crown. His diadem had descended from David; Ahab's was of recent date. Omri had been an upstart (1 Kings xvi. 16); David a prince legitimate, a sovereign created by special act of Jehovah himself. Then he (Jehoshaphat) had "riches and honour in abundance," second only to those of Solomon, both of which were tokens of Divine approbation (Ps. cxii. 3). Besides, he possessed a good name (ch. xvii. 3), which is better than great riches (Prov. xxii. 1) or precious ointment (Eccles. vii. 1). 2. *Dangerous.* (1) To his own religious character, which could not be improved thereby. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33). Few can touch pitch and not be defiled. Considering Ahab's infamous character (1 Kings xvi. 29—33), Jehoshaphat should have reasoned that the wider they stood apart the better for him (Prov. xiii. 20), and should have remembered David's prayer (Ps. xxviii. 3), as well as acted on David's resolution (Ps. ci. 4). (2) To his son's piety (if that son had any), which would not likely be increased thereby. Nothing more ruinous to a young man for both time and eternity than an irreligious wife (Prov. xii. 4); nothing more helpful than a woman that fears the Lord (Prov. xxxi. 11, 12). Whatever Jehoram was in youth—and his upbringing may be assumed to have been godly—when he reached the throne he was truculent and debased, a murderer and an idolater, both of the worst type. This appalling deterioration the writer of the Kings and the Chronicles ascribe to Athaliah's influence (ch. xxi. 6; 2 Kings viii. 18). (3) To the best interests of his kingdom, which were not likely to be furthered thereby. On the contrary, these were grievously hindered. Judah declined till, in respect of idolatry, she stood at a level almost as low as that of Israel (ch. xxi. 13). 3. *Sinful.* A daughter from the house of Omri no fitting mate for a son of Jehoshaphat. The offspring of a Jezebel and an Ahab a good man should not have taken to his bosom (2 Cor. vi. 14—16).

II. AN ILL-ADVISED JOURNEY. Jehoshaphat pays a visit to Ahab (ver. 2). The second wrong step of Judah's king: 1. *Not demanded by duty.* Nothing in his relations to Ahab or in the obligations resting upon him with reference to Ahab called for his journey to Samaria. Jehoshaphat in this case ran without being sent, always perilous for a good man. 2. *Not prompted by self-interest.* Jehoshaphat's true interest lay in keeping as far apart as possible from the house of Omri (Prov. iv. 14). Had Ahab been a pious sovereign, Jehoshaphat might have profited by his society; being the opposite, Ahab could not advance Jehoshaphat's religion (Prov. xiii. 20). 3. *Not required by courtesy.* Had Jehoshaphat been invited to Samaria, he might have found it difficult to decline without offending his royal brother. But Jehoshaphat travelled northwards of his own motion. Considering who Ahab was, it would have evidenced more prudence had Jehoshaphat stayed at home. To say the least, it was hazardous to fraternize with such a son of Belial as the King of Israel (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7).

III. AN UNHOLY CONFEDERACY. Jehoshaphat makes a league with Ahab (ver. 3). 1. *At what time?* After enjoying Ahab's hospitality, which was sumptuous. The pleasures of the table have a tendency to lay one open to temptation; indulged in to excess, they lead to other sins (2 Tim. iii. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 11). Gluttony and drunkenness go commonly together (Deut. xxi. 20; Prov. xxiii. 21; Matt. xxiv. 49); and all experience shows that when wine is in wit is out. Besides, it requires courage to accept a neighbour's hospitality—to eat his dinner and drink his wines—and deny his request. (N.B.—Beware of dining with those whose characters cannot be trusted!) 2. *On whose persuasion?* Ahab's. The King of Israel doubtless reasoned he had a double claim on Jehoshaphat, to whose son he had given a wife, and to whose self he had furnished a splendid entertainment. It is dangerous for good men to accept favours at the hands of the wicked. Jehoshaphat should have remembered David's prayer (Ps. cxli. 4). 3. *For what object?* To recover Ramoth-Gilead upon the northern frontier of Israel—a town which belonged to Israel (Deut. iv. 43; Josh. xxi. 38), and had been captured by Benhadad's father, not in the war with Baasha (ch. xvi. 4; 1 Kings xv. 20), who was not Ahab's father, but in a subsequent unrecorded struggle with Omri who was. Benhadad had promised to restore it (1 Kings xx. 34), but had neglected or refused to do so. Accordingly, Ahab may have argued that his plea for the projected campaign was good, as the monuments appear to show he had ground for thinking the time opportune, Shalmaneser II. of Assyria having shortly before, in the battle of Karkar, defeated the Syrian king (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 121). Still it was not clear that this expedition, though justified by political and military considerations, was approved by God, and Jehoshaphat would have been excused had he viewed with suspicion any enterprise that had Ahab for its author. 4. *In what terms?* "I am as thou *art*," etc. (ver. 3). The magniloquence of this utterance was probably due to the time when and the place where it was given forth. Had Jehoshaphat not been dining with Ahab, he would most likely have consulted Jehovah before committing himself and his battalions in so pompous and foolhardy a fashion. Yet it may have proceeded from a constitutional pomposity of manner with which the southern king was afflicted (cf. 2 Kings iii. 7), as were ancient sovereigns generally; compare the treaty of the Grand Duke of Kheta with Rameses II. of Egypt, "Behold, I am at one *in heart* with Ramessu-Meriamen, the great ruler of Egypt" ('Records,' etc., iv. 29). The world has travelled far since the days when kings could send their peoples to war without asking their opinion, simply to gratify revenge or slake ambition. Amongst civilized nations subjects cannot now be plunged into hostilities by their rulers without their own consent.

Learn: 1. The danger of mixed marriages. 2. The perils of the table (Prov. xxiii. 2, 6, 20). 3. The slipperiness of evil paths—one sin leads to another. 4. The propriety of wisely selecting companions (Prov. xxviii. 7, 19). 5. The folly of being confederate with wicked men. 6. The wisdom of consulting God before engaging in a doubtful enterprise.—W.

Vers. 4—8.—*A council of war: Jehoshaphat and Ahab among the prophets.* I. JEHOSHAPHAT'S PROPOSAL. To inquire at the Lord (ver. 4). A proposal: 1. *Good.* Commanded by God (Prov. iii. 5, 6), recommended by the pious (Gen. xxv. 22; 1 Sam. xxiii. 2, 4; 1 Chron. xxi. 30), approved by experience as indispensable for safety (Jer. x. 23), and one that can seldom be neglected without loss (Zeph. i. 6), and even hurt (1 Chron. x. 14). 2. *New.* At least in Israel, where the custom had been to say, 'Inquire of Baal' (Hall). As such, it probably appeared to Ahab unnecessary, as to ungodly men generally religion and its forms mostly do; though to Ahab it should likewise have served as a rebuke, reminding him of his apostasy from Jehovah and inviting him to return. "A word fitly spoken," etc. (Prov. xxv. 11). 3. *Untimely.* It should have been made not after but before the conclusion of the treaty, and was now too late. It is not clear that God will direct those whose minds are fixed before they consult him. 4. *Insincere.* Jehoshaphat's suggestion not that of an honest man who desired guidance from Heaven, but of one who half suspected he had entered on a doubtful course, from which, however, he did not care to withdraw, but for which he wished Divine permission, if not approbation. Cf. Balaam with the messengers of Balak (Numb. xxii. 7, 8).

II. AHAB'S CONSULTATION. (Ver. 5.) 1. *The oracle inquired at.* (1) Seemingly safe. The advisers were "prophets," whose calling was to pronounce upon cases of conscience, and deliver authoritative utterances concerning Heaven's will (Exod. vii. 1; Deut. xviii. 22; Ezek. xiv. 7). The recognized media of communication between Jehovah the theocratic King and his subjects; they were likewise four hundred in number, and had not Solomon said, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety"? (Prov. xi. 14; xv. 22; xxiv. 6). (2) Really doubtful. "These four hundred privy councillors were prophets, not of Jehovah, but of the calves introduced by Jeroboam, who gave themselves out, indeed, as prophets of Jehovah worshipped under the symbol of the calves," but who "came forward of their own accord without a Divine call, and were, if not in the pay, at least in the service of the idolatrous king" (Keil). (3) Wholly misleading. Not being in the secret of Jehovah (Ps. xxv. 14), Ahab's prophets could not reveal Jehovah's mind. Merely calling their answer, or believing it to be, Jehovah's would not make it so. Men have been known to dignify as "revelations" and "visions" from God what was purely the product of their own imaginations or the whisperings of lying spirits. (4) Perfectly useless. Since Ahab's prophets could not tell the mind of Jehovah, they were not the advisers Jehoshaphat wanted. Their answer would shed no light upon the problem that perplexed him. 2. *The question proposed.* (1) Wrongly expressed. Instead of asking, "Shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" Ahab should have said, "Have we done right in deciding to go to Ramoth-Gilead? or have we done wrong?" When men consult God they should state the case submitted to his judgment with accuracy. Perhaps, however, so far as Ahab was concerned, the statement was correct enough, as it cannot be supposed the rightness or wrongness of the contemplated expedition would much trouble him. That Jehoshaphat did not check his royal brother looked suspicious. (2) Insincerely moved. Ahab did not want to know the mind of Jehovah upon the subject; Jehoshaphat secretly wished that mind to accord with his own inclinations. With both the Ramoth campaign was a foregone conclusion. Under such circumstances to have asked Jehovah at all was hypocrisy and insult. Compare the conduct of the Jewish remnant who pretended to consult God through Jeremiah about going into Egypt (Jer. xlii. 20). 3. *The answer returned.* (1) What the two kings wanted: "Go up to Ramoth-Gilead." To Jehoshaphat's uneasy conscience this ought to have given relief, though it did not. (2) What Jehovah intended: that Ahab should at Ramoth receive his death-stroke. (3) What the prophets invented: they derived it from their own deceived imaginations. 4. *The reason given.* (1) A fiction, framed by the speakers to please their royal patron. (2) A falsehood, since it was not the Divine purpose at this time to permit the recovery of Ramoth-Gilead.

III. JEHOSHAPHAT'S QUESTION. (Ver. 6.) 1. *Dictated by suspicion.* The King of Judah was not satisfied with the answer of the prophets; which was not wonderful, considering: (1) Whose prophets they were—Ahab's: "Like master like man." (2) What sort of prophets they were: "of the calves," not "of Jehovah." Men usually become like the deities they worship; so do prophets. (3) What inducements they had to return such an answer to Ahab's interrogation. Ahab being their master, by whose favour they lived, their interest clearly was to please Ahab. (4) What reason he had to suspect their deliverance—it was too like the response he himself desired. 2. *Prompted by caution.* Jehoshaphat would not act precipitately. If possible, he would have Jehovah's mind upon the matter. He would imitate David, and urge Ahab to inquire at Jehovah again (1 Sam. xxiii. 4). Good men should ponder the paths of their feet (Prov. iv. 26), remembering that he who hasteth with his feet sinneth (Prov. xix. 2), and that the prudent man looketh well to his going (Prov. xiv. 15).

IV. AHAB'S ANSWER. (Ver. 7.) 1. *Promptly given.* To Jehoshaphat's inquiry, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides?" etc. (ver. 6), Ahab responded there was one. Ahab probably at the moment did not know where Elijah was, or was afraid of the Tishbite. Most likely he mentioned Micaiah because he expected either that Jehoshaphat, hearing Micaiah was in jail, would never dream of proposing he should be called, or that Micaiah, though summoned, would not have courage to speak in presence of two kings and four hundred prophets. In both expectations Ahab miscalculated and outwitted himself, as wicked men usually do. 2. *Instantly qualified.* The prophet's name was Micaiah, the son of Imlah—conjectured, without historical foundation, to have been the disguised prophet who had announced to Ahab his doom for permitting Benhadad to escape (1 Kings xx. 38), and by the rabbis to have been either he or the unnamed prophet mentioned earlier (1 Kings xx. 13, 22, 28). That Ahab disliked him was a point in his favour, it being a dubious commendation to be liked by a bad man. Moreover, the ground of Ahab's displeasure was an additional certificate to Micaiah, though a heavy condemnation of Ahab. Unless Micaiah had been a true prophet he would not so invariably have spoken evil of Ahab; that he did so was unmistakable evidence that Ahab was a bad man (Isa. iii. 11; xlviii. 22). Then Micaiah at the moment was in prison, which Ahab probably imagined would end the matter. But it did not, Jehoshaphat perhaps remembering that good men were often imprisoned unjustly (Gen. xxxix. 20), and that Micaiah's incarceration, like Hanani's (ch. xvi. 10), might be to his credit rather than the opposite.

V. JEHOSHAPHAT'S REMONSTRANCE. (Ver. 7.) The speech of Ahab told of: 1. *A great wrong to Micaiah.* Ahab would have sinned in hating Micaiah even had Micaiah been an offender (Lev. xix. 17); much more when Micaiah was innocent and Ahab's anger was without a cause (Ps. xxxv. 19; Matt. v. 22); most of all when Micaiah was a prophet of Jehovah (Ps. cv. 15), who had only spoken the words Jehovah put into his mouth (Jer. i. 7; vii. 27). 2. *A greater wrong to Jehovah.* Just because Micaiah's words were not his own so much as Jehovah's, a reflection on Micaiah was a virtual reflection on Jehovah. When Ahab charged Micaiah with always speaking evil concerning him, he practically charged Jehovah with being malignant towards him. But if Micaiah prophesied calamity for Ahab that was conditional on Ahab's disobedience, and would have been averted by repentance and reformation (Ezek. xxxiii. 14)); if Jehovah put minatory language into his prophet's mouth;—this was out of love to Ahab, to turn him from his evil ways.

VI. AHAB'S SUBMISSION. (Ver. 8.) An officer (or eunuch) was hastily despatched to fetch Micaiah from his cell. The haste may have indicated: 1. *Ahab's sense of the importance of the question under consideration;* and certainly nothing can be of greater moment for any than to understand what the will of the Lord is. Only this can be ascertained by none but renewed hearts (Rom. xii. 2). More likely, however, it marked: 2. *Ahab's sense of his own importance,* which could brook no delay in the execution of his royal commands. An earthly king's business, even when insignificant, is commonly supposed to require haste (1 Sam. xxi. 8); how much more the business of the King of kings (John ix. 4; Rom. xii. 11)! The haste may even have been due to: 3. *Ahab's inward irritation with Jehoshaphat,* to whom he had submitted, possibly not with the best grace. It requires a large amount of magnanimity to enable even good men to accept the rebukes and yield to the persuasions of others.

Learn: 1. The propriety and wisdom of consulting God in everything (Prov. iii. 6; Phil. iv. 6; Jas. i. 5). 2. The unlikelihood of learning God's mind from the world's prophets or teachers (John iii. 31). 3. The certainty that God's faithful servants will not be liked by their contemporaries, and that in exact proportion to their faithfulness (John vii. 7; xv. 19). 4. The danger of playing fast and loose with conscience.—W.

Vers. 9—27.—*Micaiah, the son of Imla—an Old Testament hero.* I. THE COURAGE HE DISPLAYED. (Vers. 9—13.) He delivered Jehovah's message under circumstances that might and probably would have intimidated him had he not been a hero. 1. *Before two kings to whom that message was unacceptable.* The scene was calculated to steal away Micaiah's fortitude, could anything have done so. In an open space or threshing-floor, at the entering in of the gate of Samaria, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, arrayed in royal robes, sat each upon his throne. Immediately encircling them were the four hundred prophets; while each king was attended by his army (Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 15. 3). Ordinarily, "there's such a divinity doth hedge a king," that Micaiah might have been excused had he trembled when ushered into the presence of two such royal personages, decked out with the trappings of lofty station, waited on by bowing courtiers, and escorted by battalions of warriors; much more when one of them was Ahab, whose displeasure he had already felt, and the might of whose arm he had lately experienced;

most of all when he knew or suspected that his words could not be acceptable to the kingly auditors on whose ears they were about to fall. Yet Micaiah flinched not. Composed as if he stood before peasants, he told out the message Jehovah put into his lips. Compare the attitudes of Hanani before Asa (ch. xvi. 7), of Elijah before Ahab (1 Kings xviii. 18; xxi. 20), of Daniel before Belshazzar (Dan. v. 13), of John the Baptist before Herod (Matt. xiv. 4), of Paul before Felix and Agrippa (Acts xxiv. 25; xxvi. 28), of Polycarp before Antoninus, of Luther before the Diet of Worms, of John Knox before the court of Mary. 2. *In the presence of four hundred false prophets whom that message opposed.* Had numbers been a test of truth, then was Micaiah wrong, since he stood alone against the united body of the Israelitish prophets. Their answer to Ahab's question was unanimous. Without one dissenting voice they had assured him Jehovah would reward his efforts with victory. Ramoth-Gilead would be delivered into his hand, and the power of Syria crushed. Zedekiah, one of these prophets, playing the clown on the occasion, putting iron horns on his head and butting like an ox, added, "Thus saith the Lord, With these horns thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed;" while all his brother-prophets, applauding his performance, urged the king to "go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper." Micaiah, however, knew that all that was false, and in spite of appearing singular, non-complaisant, obstinate, perverse, would not cry, "Amen!" would not shape his words either to please the king or accord with the fashion of the hour. It mattered nothing to Micaiah that he stood alone—his feet were planted on the rock of truth; or that men might regard him as "odd," "punctilious," "over-scrupulous," provided he was right. Compare Elijah on Mount Carmel before the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, with the four hundred prophets of the grove (1 Kings xviii. 19). 3. *Though he knew that message would not improve his own prospects.* On the way from prison to the king's presence he had obtained a hint from his conductor what kind of "oracle" would best suit—would most gratify the king and recompense himself. All the state-prophets had observed in what quarter the wind sat, and had prophesied accordingly. They discerned what their royal master wanted, and why should they who ate his bread decline to gratify his whims? With one consent had they declared "good" to Ahab. If he, Micaiah, consulted for "good" to himself he would act upon that hint; taking his cue from the "prophets," he would let his word be as theirs. But Micaiah was too honest to play the knave. Micaiah understood not the art of studying self. Micaiah knew his duty was to speak the word given him by God, without regarding consequences to any, least of all to himself. And he did it!

II. THE ORACLE HE DELIVERED. (Vers. 14—22.) 1. *A seeming permission.* Micaiah answered Ahab in the words of the false prophets (ver. 14), in irony (Keil, Bertheau), or in reproof of Ahab's hypocrisy (Bähr). Either Micaiah meant the opposite of what he said—that the advice Ahab had received was worthless; or he intended to be understood as declining to give other oracle than that already spoken by the prophets, which was the one Ahab wanted. But in any case Ahab suspected Micaiah's sincerity. 2. *A symbolic warning.* Adjured to speak the truth, he related to the king a vision he had seen—"all Israel scattered upon the mountains as sheep without a shepherd;" and a voice he had heard—"These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace." Whether the words of Moses (Numb. xxvii. 17) were in Micaiah's mind when he described his vision or not, the import of the vision and the voice was as patent to Ahab as to him. Ahab was to fall at Ramoth-Gilead; Israel to become like a flock without a shepherd; the campaign to end in failure and shame. 3. *A serious explanation.* Accused by Ahab of speaking from a spirit of malignant hatred towards him, Micaiah depicted another vision, which let the king see the real deceivers were his own prophets, not he, Micaiah. The vision, most likely received some time before and not then only for the first time, consisted of a dramatic representation of the Divine government, in which were set forth the following truths: (1) That God works by means of secondary agents. The prophet saw Jehovah, as Isaiah (vi. 1) afterwards beheld him, seated upon his throne, with all the host of heaven, standing on his right hand and on his left. The host of heaven was the innumerable company of angels of which David sang (Ps. lxviii. 17), two battalions of which met Jacob at Mahanaim (Gen. xxxii. 2), and many regiments of which protected Elisha and his servant at Dothan (2 Kings vi. 17). Their designation "host" indicated their number and order; their position, "on his right hand and on his left," marked their submission and readiness to execute Jehovah's will (Ps. ciii. 20, 21). (2) That agencies of evil equally with those of good are under the Divine control. Though God is not and cannot be the author of sin, he may yet, through the wicked actions of his creatures, accomplish his designs. His purpose was that Ahab should fall at Ramoth-Gilead; he effected that purpose by suffering Ahab to be misled by his false prophets, and these to be deceived by a lying spirit. Neither could the prophets have spoken to Ahab, nor the lying spirit whispered to the prophets, without the Divine permission. This truth Micaiah dramatically portrayed by representing Jehovah as taking counsel with his angels, and asking, "Who shall entice Ahab King of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?" (3) That God does not always hinder from being deceived those who wish to be deceived. Ahab and his prophets desired to believe Jehovah in favour of the campaign, and Jehovah allowed them to be persuaded by the lying spirit that he was. Having wilfully turned their backs upon Jehovah and become worshippers of idols, Jehovah now left them to reap the fruit of their folly—gave them up to strong delusion to believe a lie (Isa. lxvi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 11). "Not by any sudden stroke of vengeance, but by the very network of evil counsel which he has woven for himself, is the King of Israel to be led to his ruin" (Stanley, 'Jewish Church,' p. 316). (4) That God, in permitting the wicked to be the victims of their own evil machinations, only exercises upon them righteous retribution. "It is just that one sin should be punished by another" (Bishop Hall). This principle universally operative in Providence. 4. *A solemn denunication.* Without further parley, or veiling of his thoughts in metaphorical speech, he declares that the king had been imposed upon by his prophets, and that Jehovah had spoken evil against him. There are times when God's messengers must deliver God's messages to their hearers with utmost plainness and directness of speech.

III. THE RECOMPENSE HE RECEIVED. (Vers. 23—27.) 1. *Insult from the prophets,* through their leader Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah. (1) What it was. A blow from the fist, and a stroke from the tongue—the first hard to bear, the second harder; the first a common resort of cowards, the second of persons overcome in argument. For Zedekiah to smite Micaiah on the cheek, as afterwards the soldiers smote Jesus in Pilate's prætorium (Matt. xxvi. 27), and later the bystanders Paul in the council chamber at Ananias's command (Acts xxiii. 2), was "intolerably insolent—much more to do so in the presence of two kings." "The act was unbeseeming the person, more the presence; prophets may reprove, they may not smite" (Hall). It was, besides, painfully like a confession that Zedekiah was conscious of having been found out. (2) Why it was. To gratify his thirst for revenge. It was easier to do so in this way than by attempting to disprove the truth of Micaiah's oracle. Any fool can exercise his fist; it takes a wise man to use his tongue with effect. Zedekiah probably imagined he did so when he mockingly inquired, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" That in so saying he claimed to be as much under the Spirit of Jehovah as Micaiah, may be true; that Micaiah understood him to be talking lightly seems apparent from the reply returned him: "Thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself." The event would decide which of the two predictions was correct. When the people rose up against the prophets who had misled their king, Zedekiah, as he fled for safety to some inner chamber, or from chamber to chamber, would understand how to answer his own jest. 2. *Punishment from the king.* Micaiah was remanded back to his confinement in the city jail. Amon the governor of the city, and Joash the king's son—not necessarily a son of Ahab, but a prince of the blood—as commandants of the prison, were instructed to thrust him back into his old cell, and "feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction;" in modern phrase, to subject him to imprisonment with hard labour, until Ahab should return in peace (ver. 26). It was severe upon Micaiah, yet he retracted not. Without a murmur at his hard fate, he cheerfully returned to his cell, only calling the people to observe that if Ahab returned home from the war in peace, he was not a true prophet (ver. 27).

Learn: 1. The nobility of true courage. 2. The certainty that good men will suffer for their goodness. 3. The reality of an overruling Providence. 4. The infallibility of God's Word.—W.

Vers. 28—34.—*The battle of Ramoth—an ill-fated expedition.* I. AHAB'S DISGUISE. (Ver. 29.) 1. *Artfully contrived.* Apprehensive of the truth of Micaiah's prediction, Ahab agreed with Jehoshaphat to lay aside his royal robes and go into battle in the garb of a common soldier, perhaps (though not so said) concealing his well-known features behind a vizor, while he (Jehoshaphat), who had no occasion to dread an evil issue from the campaign, should array himself as usual in regal apparel—not in Ahab's robes (Josephus), but in his own. In this way Ahab may have reckoned on a double chance of safety. On the one hand, his disguise would assist him to elude the notice of the enemy; on the other hand, Jehoshaphat's kingly clothing would probably cause him to be mistaken for Ahab. 2. *Wickedly designed.* In so far as Ahab's contrivance was prompted by a desire of self-preservation it was legitimate, though scarcely valorous, and palpably selfish, considering that he did not suggest the like expedient to Jehoshaphat, but rather recommended the contrary. The King of Israel's artifice, however, had not its origin in any praiseworthy motive. Whether he hoped that Jehoshaphat might fall, while he escaped and seized upon the southern kingdom (Schulz), cannot be known, and is probably "too low and unworthy" a scheme "even for a character so bad as Ahab" (Keil); it is certain he aimed at falsifying Micaiah's prediction by evading his threatened doom. This, indeed, he might have done by foregoing the Ramoth campaign, to which he was not called by Jehovah; but to attempt by such a flimsy or even any device to elude Divine vengeance while defying the Divine will, was a fearful aggravation of his original offence. 3. *Completely ineffectual.* "Ahab's fate found him without his robes" (Josephus), while Jehoshaphat, who seemed to be in the greater peril of the two, escaped unhurt. So God commonly confounds the counsels of the crafty, and defeats the designs of deceitful workers.

II. BENHADAD'S ORDER. (Ver. 30.) 1. *The meaning of it.* In commanding the captains of his chariots, thirty-two in number (1 Kings xxii. 31), to fight neither with small nor great, but only with the King of Israel, the King of Syria meant that against Ahab they should direct their principal and, as far as practicable, exclusive attack. This they would be able to do, seeing that Ahab, according to custom, would appear upon the field in his royal robes. That ancient monarchs followed this practice appears from the monuments of Egypt—the heroic poem of Pentaur representing Ramses II. as fighting in person at the head of his warriors and charioteers against the Khita and saying, "The diadem of the royal snake adorned my head. It spat fire and glowing flame in the face of my enemies" (Brugsch, 'Egypt under the Pharaohs,' ii. 63). 2. *The motive of it.* (1) Perhaps clemency, as knowing that the shortest way to end the war was to secure the capture or destruction of Ahab, armies commonly being disheartened when they lose their leaders. (2) More probably revenge, as never having been able to forget, and far less forgive, the disgrace of his own capture by Ahab in a previous campaign of his against Ahab. If it was so, it was a poor return for the merciful consideration and mild treatment then shown to him by Ahab (1 Kings xx. 30—34). But in ordinary life least kindness is often received from those from whom one might expect the most.

III. JEHOSHAPHAT'S DELIVERANCE. (Ver. 31.) 1. *His imminent peril.* Mistaking him for the King of Israel, the Syrian charioteers surrounded him. This natural, and had Jehoshaphat been smitten the blame would have been his own. He who runs into danger unbidden need hardly expect to come out of it in safety. Moreover, just as certainly as he who walketh with wise men shall be wise, the companion of fools shall be destroyed (Prov. xiii. 20); if he is not, the praise is due not to himself but to God (Ps. cxv. 1). 2. *His sudden outcry.* That this "cry" was a prayer, the Chronicler is thought by some to indicate; this, however, is not absolutely certain. The Chronicler says not Jehovah helped Jehoshaphat because (cf. xix. 3), but only when he cried, and Jehovah might have helped him without being appealed to by a formal supplication. Considering where Jehoshaphat was, it is as likely as not that he did not address Jehovah in prayer; but remembering who and what Jehoshaphat was, a descendant of David and a follower of Jehovah, it is certain his "outcry" would sound in Jehovah's ears as an appeal for help. 3. *His mysterious rescue.* Scarcely had he "cried" when the Syrian charioteers turned aside and left him unmolested. If the "cry" was a "prayer," Jehoshaphat must have looked upon his unexpected escape as an answer to his supplication; if only a "shout" or signal of distress, he must still have regarded the extraordinary behaviour of the Syrians as little short of a providential miracle—as a merciful interposition of Jehovah on his behalf, as indeed it was. Jehovah helped Jehoshaphat; moved the charioteers and warriors to turn aside, not by any supernatural influence upon them, but by so ordering the succession of events, that they understood Jehoshaphat's cry and recognized his features in time to let them see he was not the object of their pursuit.

IV. JEHOVAH'S ARROW. (Ver. 33.) 1. *Whence it flew.* From the bow of an unknown warrior, most likely an obscure common soldier, who shot either aimlessly into the ranks of the Israelitish army, or with deliberate aim, but at no one he knew, at the first man that came into his field of vision. Either explanation satisfies the phraseology—"a certain man drew a bow at a venture." That the man's name was Naaman (Josephus) is a groundless tradition. 2. *Whither it sped.* To the person of Ahab. All events are under God's control. He directeth the flights of arrows as of fowls, the careers of javelins as the courses of stars, according to the counsel of his will. Nothing happens by accident. In a world governed by infinite wisdom and power chance is impossible. The Syrian archer drew his bow at a venture; not so did Jehovah draw his. The Syrian sharpshooter knew not at whom he aimed; Jehovah understood well who was his target. "Every bullet has its billet," not because the gunner but because God directs its path through the air. Not a sparrow can fall to the ground without our heavenly Father's permission (Matt. x. 29), nor shaft can hit till he pleases. 3. *To what it led.* To the death of Ahab. It smote him "between the joints of the harness;" rather between the lower armour and the breastplate (Revised Version), between the corselet and the tunic (Luther), between the joints and the harness (Keil). It found the spot where the parts of Ahab's armour fitted least closely, and there it entered the lower region of his body. Had it penetrated as far as did the arrow with which Jehu shot Jehoram (1 Kings ix. 24), it must have proved instantaneously fatal. That it did not seems a natural inference from the fact that he was able to remain upon the field.

Learn: 1. The folly of attempting to outwit God. 2. The certainty that no disguise can hide a wicked man from God. 3. The impossibility of evading death when the appointed hour has come. 4. The clemency of God to his erring people. 5. The reality of God's interference with the affairs of time.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX.

The matter of this chapter is preserved for us by the writer of Chronicles alone, and is of much significance. After glancing at the moment's outward "peace" (ver. 1), which Jehoshaphat had on his return to Jerusalem, the narrative, leaving in deep oblivion all he must have thought and felt and may have spoken of the end of his brother-king, and of his own late private intimacy and public alliance with him, tells how he was reined up by Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer (vers. 2, 3); and thereupon how he wisely revisited his kingdom, as it were through its length and breadth, sought to "bring them back to the Lord God of their fathers," remodelling and refilling the various offices of the judges, priests, and Levites (vers. 4—11), and earnestly exhorted them.

Ver. 1.—**In peace.** Compare the use of the phrase in vers. 16 and 26, 27 of last chapter. The only *peace* in which it could be reasonably supposed Jehoshaphat returned to his house and the metropolis was that of freedom from war, and of present "assurance of his life."

Ver. 2.—**And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him.** For Hanani, the faithful father of a faithful son, see ch. xvi. 7—10, where we read that he "came to Asa King of Judah," etc. Also for Jehu, see 1 Kings xvi. 1—4, where we read of his commission at the word of the Lord to rebuke Baasha the King of Israel, at a date upwards of thirty years before the present; and see ch. xx. 34, which would lead us to infer, though not with certainty, that he outlived Jehoshaphat. The book called by his name, however, was not necessarily finished by him. It is evident that neither the word of the Lord nor the messengers and prophets of the Lord were bound by the orthodox limits of the divided kingdom. The powerful character and the moral force of the true prophet is again seen (comp. ch. xv. 1—8) in the way in which he was wont to go *out to meet* the evil-doer, though he were a king. We are accustomed to set the whole of this down to the account of the special inspiration of the prophet of old; yet *that* was but typical of the intrinsic force that truth faithfully spoken should wield in its own right in later times. Religion is *established* in the nation and people that know and do *this*, by the accredited teachers of it, viz. the plain rebuke of the wrong. **Shouldest thou . . . love them that hate the Lord?** Strong suspicion must attend upon Jehoshaphat, that he had been not a little misled by answering to some personal fascination in Ahab. The prophet's rebuke is not that Jehoshaphat helped both Israel and therein Judah also against a common foe, but that he helped the ungodly, etc. **Therefore wrath upon thee, etc.** The significance of this sentence was probably not merely retrospective, glancing at the fact that Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem *minus* the victory for which he had bid, but was probably an intimation of troubles that should ripen, were already ripening for Jehoshaphat, in the coming invasion of his own kingdom (ch. xx. 1—3).

Ver. 3.—Nevertheless; Hebrew, אֲבָל; one of the few particles that were *affirmative* in the earlier Hebrew (Gen. xlii. 21), but *adversative* in the later (ch. i. 4; Dan. x. 7, 21). It may be well rendered, "on the other hand." The expression here recalls the less favourable "notwithstanding" of Rev. ii. 20. **There are good things found in thee** (see ch. xvii. 1—9).

Ver. 4.—From Beersheba to Mount Ephraim. The length of the good land is not to be quoted, as of old, the undivided "Dan to Beersheba," but Beersheba to Mount Ephraim (ch. xiii. 16—19). Jehoshaphat makes another conscientious and vigorous endeavour to reform his own kingdom, to keep it steadfast in the worship of God, and free from idolatry. It is to be noticed that he does not turn away his ear from the rebuke which had been given him, but turns his heart to it. As it does not appear that he broke with Israel and Israel's kings (ch. xx. 35, 37; 2 Kings iii. 7, 14, 24), it is possible, especially in view of ver. 37 in our ch. xx., that the severity of the Divine rebuke was understood to apply to the occasions which found Jehoshaphat in alliance with a king notably bad, and for some supposed chance of advantage to himself. This last element of consideration will difference sufficiently the two cases just cited, to wit, the case in which Jehoshaphat joined himself with Azariah, and is sternly "prophesied against," and that in which he helped Jehoram, and through Elisha's intervention gained him the day.

Ver. 5.—Judges . . . fenced cities. Jehoshaphat proceeds from direct religious reforms to that which is of importance only second in the life of a nation—reform in the matter of civil administration of justice. The skeleton here given of what should be the character of a *judge*, and why, harmonizes well with the uniform stress laid in Scripture upon "justice and judgment." It is hard indeed to see, rather impossible, upon what foundation a sure structure of civil growth and stability can be laid, except on that of positive religion. Note the positions and the succinct arguments of vers. 6, 7; and how unequivocally they are based upon faith in a personal God, and upon his revealed character. It can scarcely be that this was the first time of judges being set in the cities of Judah, but possibly the meaning intended to be conveyed with emphasis is, that now, looking well round his kingdom, he took care that all the cities should be properly provided with the necessary judges, while of late some had been, and some had not, and some, though they had been officered with judges, had found them not what judges ought to be. The immense majority of the "six thousand" Levite "officers and judges" of David's regulation (1 Chron. xxiii. 4; xxvi. 29) had, with their superiors, kings and prophets, gone astray. With our present passage may be compared Deut. xvi. 18—20, where the original enactment of judges and officers is narrated. ***Fenced cities.*** Hebrew for "fenced," בְּצֻרוֹת; kal passive part. plur. The word occurs twenty-six times from the Book of Numbers to the Book of the Prophet Zechariah, and is rendered in the Authorized Version "fenced" or "defenced" twenty-two times, "walled" twice, "strong" once, and "mighty" once. The "gates" of the original institution in Deuteronomy are now (probably still the gates of) *fenced cities.*

Vers. 6, 7.—The statement of the Divine principles laid down in these verses for the foundations of the "kingdom of heaven" on earth, and the doing of God's "will on earth, even as it is in heaven," stretch from Moses and Job (Lev. xix. 15; Deut. i. 17; x. 17; xvi. 19; Job xxxiv. 19) to SS. Paul and Peter (Acts x. 34; Rom. ii. 11; 1 Pet. i. 17).

Ver. 8.—This and the following three verses close the immediate subject by stating with some emphasis the reform in the metropolis itself, of the "supreme tribunal," as it has been called (Exod. xviii. 19, 20, 26; Deut. xvii. 9, 10, 12), composed of Levites, priests, and chief of the fathers of Israel; *i.e.* probably heads of the whole family that went by the same name. Of course every father was head of his own family, but only one (such as in modern times by primogeniture the eldest son) the representative head of the entire family, and under this expression is no doubt naturally set forth only those families that were of some relative consideration or distinction. **For the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies.** Considering the plainer distinction in the language of ver. 11, there can be no doubt that the words, "for the judgment of the Lord," do not intend simply to describe godly judgment, but point to dues payable to the Lord in some religious aspect: "Render to Cæsar . . . and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21; Mark xii. 17; Luke xx. 25); while the words, "and for controversies," point to the mutual strifes of the people. **When they returned;** Hebrew, "*and* they returned." It has been proposed to remove this clause so as to begin the next verse with it (and so the Revised Version shows as a clause by itself, "And they returned to Jerusalem"), and, to make this fit the better, the word *did* in the first line of the verse is changed into "*had.*" It is, however, possible to render the clause, "And they dwelt in Jerusalem," which would make a far more coherent sense, and would mark the permanence and stationariness of this chief court.

Ver. 10.—**Come . . . of your brethren . . . in their cities.** These words confirm our foregoing note, and point to the *appeal* character of the Jerusalem court. Note also the clear connection of the verse with Deut. xvii. 8, 10, 11; Exod. xxi. 12—27. **Law . . . commandment, statutes . . . judgments.** It might sometimes need to be shown how the particular *commandment* flowed from main and essential *law;* and the written *statute* is easily distinguishable from those *judgments*, which were more like "judge-made" law. **Ye shall not trespass;** Revised Version, more correctly, *ye shall not be guilty.*

Ver. 11 —**Amariah.** Probably the Amariah of 1 Chron. vii. 11. To the priest plainly the sacred causes are entrusted. **Zebadiah** is not known elsewhere. **Officers** (see Exod. v. 10). **The Lord shall be with the good** (see ch. xv. 3, 4).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The third chapter in Jehoshaphat's career.* In this chapter, regarded for the time in the light of a third chapter in the biography of Jehoshaphat, we are enabled to gauge, not altogether unsatisfactorily, his character as respects the measure of right and wrong in it, and of good and evil in himself. And we are reminded that—

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING, MOST UNDENIABLY, AS THE PEACE OF PRESENT SAFETY, WITHOUT THAT WHICH FLOWS FROM CONSISTENT RECTITUDE, UNFALTERING INTEGRITY, THE INNER APPROVAL OF CONSCIENCE, AND THE CONVICTION OF GOD'S OWN APPROVAL.

II. THERE WAS ONE REDEEMING FEATURE IN THE CONDUCT OF JEHOSHAPHAT, A SLENDER TRIBUTARY THAT MAY COUNT FOR SOMETHING IN THE WHOLE SCENE, VIZ. THE ABSENCE OF ALL PRETENCE OF SELF-DEFENCE, OF EXCUSE, OF EXTENUATION OF WHAT WAS WRONG, AND EVEN OF REPLY. We do not hear of penitence, of confession, or of repentance in so many words, but this *last* we certainly do argue from the fresh devotion of Jehoshaphat to the right, and to the religious teaching of his people; and the former two we may *infer* in turn from this.

III. THERE IS THE SURELY STILL CONTINUING STREAM, FLOWING CALM, FULL, DEEP, OF THAT "MERCY WITH GOD" WHICH SUSTAINS AND FEEDS "THE FEAR" OF HIM IN PLACE OF DESTROYING IT. There are, perhaps, few greater or more striking contrasts between Divine and human *methods* than that herein to be noted. If *hope* is wrecked, practically all in any man's life and character is too certainly wrecked also. The threats, denunciations, immediate and peremptory proceedings of men towards offending fellow-men, even in the clearest cases of wrong possible, work too often either callousness or recklessness. But God's forbearing methods, his pitying compassion, his patient long-suffering, and sweet disposition of "mercy enduring for ever," preserve and just save the continuity of (what is sometimes a very brittle thread) human hope. How much of human life, of reason itself, and of encouragement to moral reformation, depends on this one feature of the Divine administration, this one grand attribute of God!

IV. THERE IS A STEADY, CONSISTENT PRESERVING OF THE PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE AND OF MORAL GOVERNMENT ON THE PART OF GOD. The guilty is *not* treated as the innocent—"therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord" (ver. 2)—or as though innocent. Sometimes there is one solution of the crucial difficulty involved in this, sometimes another. Sometimes the penalty, whatever it may be, *is paid*, suffering endured, and punishment gone through; sometimes the "way of escape" is found, and under the pressingness of the case is distinctly *provided for* the guilty, but under safeguards which both indicate and sufficiently *guarantee* the moral aspects necessary.

V. GRIEVOUS FAULTS AND SINS OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD ARE INDEED GRIEVOUS BLOTS ON THEIR ESCUTCHEON; BUT SO FAR FROM SHUTTING UP THEIR WORK FOR GOD, AND SHUTTING OUT HOPE FROM THEMSELVES, THEY MAY BE MADE, BY WARNING AND REPENTANCE, THE VERY DATE OF A NEW DEPARTURE OF REDOUBLED DEVOTION. It was manifestly so with Jehoshaphat (vers. 4—11). Except on some such suggestion as is offered above, we must remain in much uncertainty as to why there is no word recorded of the working of the inner thoughts of Jehoshaphat, either as he went wrong, or as he was restored to the ways of righteousness. Very different measure is given us in the disclosures of Scripture in other instances, such as that of David and a host besides. But instead of most painful uncertainty (as in the history, for instance, of Solomon and many another man) as to the *facts* succeeding a fall, the case of Jehoshaphat is not less clear than that of St. Peter, though in matter so different. Jehoshaphat's tears, self-upbraidings, confession, and vows are *not* told. It would have been interesting to know them, and our curiosity is no doubt stimulated by the taciturnity and remarkable reticence of the historian respecting them. But what is most to the point *is* communicated in Scripture's own best way. The king left off to do evil; did *not* repeat it; learned to do well "again" (ver. 4) himself; with redoubled energy urged the same on the people (vers. 6, 7, 9, 11); and kept a good record, as may be seen in the next and last chapter of his life, to that life's end.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*Friendship with man and faithfulness to God.* The Apostle John fleeing from the baths because he saw the enemy of Christ entering, is a familiar picture. But how far are we to carry such unwillingness to be associated with the ungodly or the unbelieving? Jehoshaphat is here strongly rebuked for his intimacy with Ahab and the help he had been giving that wicked monarch. Let us consider—

I. HOW FAR OUR FREEDOM EXTENDS. It surely extends to: 1. The interchange of common courtesies. "Be courteous" is a maxim that will apply to every one. "Civility brings no conclusions," and may be shown to all people, without implying any sanction of their heresies or immoralities. 2. Fidelity in service and equity in negotiation. It was once thought right to take advantage of a man if he were a Jew or an infidel. But unrighteousness can never be anything but hateful to God and injurious to man, and justice and fair-dealing can never be otherwise than commendable. Moreover, the Christian servant or slave was urged by the apostle to shew a right spirit "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Pet. ii. 18). 3. Succour to those who are in need. Pity for those who are in distress, and the helping hand stretched out to those that are "ready to perish," can never be contrary to the mind and the will of Jesus Christ. 4. Alliance for the promotion of a good common end. Here it may be objected that this would justify Jehoshaphat in his "offensive alliance" with Ahab, as they were seeking the lawful common object of crippling Syria. But it must be remembered that by helping to sustain the kingdom of Israel Jehoshaphat was perpetuating the division between the twelve tribes, the dismemberment of the country; and he was sustaining a power which was recreant to its high mission, and was positively and seriously hostile to sacred truth, to the kingdom of God. We may lawfully associate with ungodly men as fellow-citizens who are united in such rightful objects as saving life, as promoting health, as providing food, as extending trade and commerce. In so doing we are not in any way compromising principle or sustaining wrong; we are not "helping the ungodly" or "loving them that hate the Lord."

II. WHERE THE LINE OF PROHIBITION IS DRAWN. We have clearly no right to ally ourselves with sinful men when by so doing: 1. We advance the cause of unrighteousness or ungodliness. Better sacrifice anything we have at heart, better leave our personal preferences or our temporal interests entirely disregarded, than do that which will give an impetus to the cause of infidelity or immorality. In such a case we should certainly draw down God's displeasure; we need no prophet to say to us, "Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." 2. When we show ourselves indifferent to the honour of our Divine Saviour. Jehoshaphat's ostentatious companionship with such an enemy of God as Ahab amounted to a tacit intimation that he could, when he wished to do so, be forgetful whose servant he was; he laid by that consideration to serve his momentary purpose. There may be some one who is a very pronounced enemy of Jesus Christ who seeks our friendship. To be very intimate with him is to put a slight upon our attachment to our Lord; it is to put him in the second place. Then fidelity to Christ will keep us at home; will lead us to seek other intimacies, to find our friendships with those who do not "hate the Lord." 3. When we expose our own character to serious risk. For one who is of a weaker mind and will to be associated intimately and for any length of time with an enemy of the Lord, can have but one result. It must issue in spiritual degeneracy; it may, indeed, end in spiritual ruin. Let those who contemplate the formation of a lifelong friendship beware how they trust their souls to any one who can be called "ungodly," how they "love them that hate the Lord." A sensitive, yielding spirit had better be "drowned in the midst of the sea" than be immersed in an atmosphere of worldliness or of unbelief, where all true piety and all living faith are daily being weakened and are constantly withering away.—C.

Ver. 4.—*A royal mission which is a heavenly one.* Of the many things said in favour of Jehoshaphat, perhaps nothing is more highly commendatory than this, that "he went out again through the people . . . and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers." He could not have done anything worthier of himself, or more likely to result in permanent good to the people over whom he reigned.

I. THE ROYAL MISSION. Possibly, as Matthew Henry suggests, the tie which bound the people to Jehovah had been somewhat relaxed by their observance of the familiarity between their sovereign and the idolatrous court at Jezreel; if this were so, Jehoshaphat, after Jehu's rebuke (ver. 2), would feel constrained to do everything in his power to strengthen the attachment of his subjects to the living God. But whatever may have prompted him, he did well to (1) interest himself personally in this vital subject; (2) to take vigorous practical measures to effect his purpose; and (3) to go through his self-appointed task with the energy and the thoroughness which command success. He "brought back," etc. It was a royal mission that reflected great honour on the later years of his reign.

II. THE HEAVENLY MISSION of which it may be said to be a hint. Jesus Christ "came to seek and to save that which was lost." He saw mankind separated by a sad spiritual distance from the heavenly Father, from the living God; he laid upon himself the holy and heavenly task of "bringing him back unto the Lord." For this noblest, Divinest purpose he (1) stooped to creaturedom, to our poor humanity, to poverty, to utmost humiliation; (2) "endured amazing loss," pain, sorrow, spiritual agony; (3) died upon the cross. By so doing he (*a*) made the way open for man's return; (*b*) provided the spiritual force which is lifting a degraded nature to heights of holiness and wisdom. In this heavenly mission is he now engaged, bringing back to God the race that has left his side and lost his likeness and forfeited his favour.

III. A MISSION WORTHY OF ALL IMITATION. This deliberate action of leading men back to God was royal; it is heavenly, Divine; it may be *common to every Christian man.* 1. Around us are those who have left the God of their fathers. It may be that they are of those who have been long estranged and have determinately refused to hear his fatherly invitation to return; or it may be that they have sought and found reconciliation with him and have wandered into half-hearted service, or into indifference, or into some positive transgression. 2. These are within our knowledge and our reach. They may be beneath the roof under which we dwell, or worshippers in the sanctuary where we bend the knee in prayer, or nominal workers in the field where we are labouring; or they may be where we shall find them if we seek them, as Jehoshaphat found the objects of his royal care as he "went out through the people from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim." But they are where we can find them, and can lay the kind, arresting hand of holy love upon them. 3. To such we can render an inestimable service. We can bring to bear upon them a gracious, winning influence. We can make an earnest, brotherly appeal to them. We can urge them to return to the Lord God of their fathers on every ground; on the ground (1) that he, their Father and their Friend, is grieved with their obduracy or their defection, and is longing for their return;

(2) that they are remaining where their life is a long disobedience, a continued sin and wrong; (3) that their return will issue in a peace and a joy, in a spiritual blessedness, the depth and duration of which they cannot measure or imagine; (4) that if they do thus return they will give boundless satisfaction to the fathers whose God they have forsaken or neglected, to all those human friends and kindred whose love is true and deep, who will welcome them with fullest joy to the fold of Christ, to the kingdom of heaven.—C.

Vers. 5—9.—*Ennobling the earthly, or making sacred the secular.* Jehoshaphat made his reign over Judah a continuous act of Divine service. For while that reign was not without blemish and mistake, the king was evidently ruling "in the fear of the Lord," and was trying to bring his people into willing and loyal subjection to their Divine Sovereign. In taking the measure he now took he acted with great intelligence. For nothing would be so likely to lead the people to discontentment and rebellion against the existing order as a sense of prevailing injustice, of wrongs unredressed, of rights that could not be realized; nothing, on the other hand, was so fitted to infuse a spirit of loyalty to the administration and to Jehovah himself as a well-regulated system of justice, extending over the whole land. The piety which Jehoshaphat was thus illustrating he exemplified in detail by giving the instructions he delivered to the judges (vers. 6, 7, 9, 10). In these he showed that the ordinary act of judgment in secular matters might and should be made a true and sacred service rendered unto God, an act of piety. For he charged them to do everything in their courts, as we should do everything in our homes and in our houses of business—

I. UNTO THE LORD. They were to do all "in the fear of the Lord" (ver. 9); they were to judge "not for man, but for the Lord" (ver. 6). This is an anticipation of the instruction given by Paul in his letter to the Church at Colosse, where he bids the slaves serve their masters "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;" whatsoever they do, doing it "heartily, as *to the Lord,* and *not unto men*" (Col. iii. 22, 23). There is nothing in which we are engaged, of the humblest kind and in the lowliest sphere, which we may not do and which we should not do "for the Lord" or "unto the Lord," by acting "faithfully and with a perfect heart," in such wise as we are assured he will approve, and with the distinct view of pleasing and honouring him; thus doing we "make drudgery Divine," as George Herbert tells us.

II. WITH HIS FELT PRESENCE AND HIS DIVINE AID. The Lord "is *with you* in the judgment" (ver. 6); "the Lord shall *be with* the good" (ver. 11). If we can but feel that God is "with us," that our Divine Master is by our side, with his sympathizing and sustaining presence, then we are satisfied, then we are strong. The position we occupy may be very humble, the situation may be a lonely or a perilous one, the opponents may be numerous and their opposition may be severe, the duties may be very onerous; but Christ is with us, his smile is upon us, his arm is working with us and for us, his reward is in his hand; we will go happily and cheerily on our way.

III. IN HIS OWN WAY. "For there is no iniquity with the Lord our God," etc. (ver. 7). They were to judge even as God himself did, in the same spirit and on the same principles; as impartially, as righteously, as he did. And our Lord calls upon us to elevate our earthly life, to make every part of it sacred and noble, by introducing into everything the spirit and the principles which are Divine. "Be ye perfect," he says, "even as your Father in heaven is perfect;" "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another;" "Follow thou me." It is, indeed, a very excellent and positively invaluable enlargement and ennoblement of this human life that every hour and every act of it may be spent and wrought as God is spending his eternity and is ruling in his Divine domain. The very same principles of purity, righteousness, and equity, the very same spirit of unselfishness and love, of gentleness and considerateness, which he displays in his government of the universe, we may be manifesting in the lowliest paths in which we walk from day to day. As he is, so may we be. His life we may be living. There need be nothing mean or small about us, for we may be everywhere and in everything "the children of our Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 45). In every walk of life we may be closely following Christ.—C.

Vers. 1—3.—*The sovereign and the seer.* I. UNDESERVED MERCY TO THE SOVEREIGN. (Ver. 1.) 1. *Jehoshaphat returns from Ramoth-Gilead.* Having gone thither without the Divine sanction—indeed, against the Divine will—he might have been left there and not permitted to return. But God preserves the going out and coming in of his people (Ps. cxxi. 8), even when they walk not in his ways. 2. *Jehoshaphat returns to Jerusalem.* Having left his capital and kingdom on an errand to which he was not called, he might have found both taken from him and barred against him on his return. But Jehovah, always better to his people than they deserve, had watched over both while Jehoshaphat was absent. 3. *Jehoshaphat returns to his house in peace.* Very different might his home-coming have been (Isa. lix. 8); not alive and in safety, as Micaiah had predicted (ch. xviii. 20), but as Ahab was brought to Samaria, dead; shot by an arrow from a Syrian bow like the King of Israel, or smitten by the Syrian charioteers as himself nearly was, and certainly would have been had Jehovah not interposed. But, again, God is faithful to his covenant, even when his people are not faithful to their duty (Ps. cxi. 5; 2 Tim. ii. 13; Heb. x. 23).

II. DESERVED REBUKE FROM THE SEER. (Vers. 2, 3.) 1. *A severe reprimand.* Charged by Hanani's son Jehu with a twofold offence: (1) Helping the ungodly. Aiding the wicked in their necessities or enterprises, when these are not sinful, never was a crime against Jehovah in Old Testament times (Lev. xix. 18, 34; Deut. xxii. 1; Job xxii. 29; Zech. vii. 9), and is not prohibited but commanded in the gospel (Rom. xiii. 9; Gal. v. 14; Jas. ii. 8); but then, as now, sympathizing with them in their wicked thoughts, joining with them in their wicked ways, and assisting them in their wicked projects, is interdicted to all who profess to be followers of God and of Christ (Ps. i. 1; xxiv. 4; cxli. 4; Rom. xiii. 12; Eph. v. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 19, 21, 22; 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12). (2) Loving them that hate God. This also permissible in the sense in which God himself and Christ loved and still loves sinners, pitying their misery, compassionating their frailty, grieving over their iniquity, and seeking their recovery and salvation. But in the sense of extending affection and confidence, sympathy and support, to such as are private and public enemies of God, despisers of his religion, deserters from his worship, violators of his commandments, oppressors of his people, opponents of his cause, is a stretch of charity which neither then was nor now is allowable. Rather among Hebrew saints to hate Jehovah's enemies was accounted the supreme virtue (Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22). If Christian saints may not hate the persons, they are still enjoined to hate the works and ways of the Lord's enemies (2 Cor. xii. 21; Eph. iv. 26; Phil. iii. 18). (On Hanani, see ch. xvi. 7.) 2. *An alarming sentence.* "Wrath from before Jehovah" should come upon Jehoshaphat certainly and speedily. This was inevitable, since Jehovah, as a jealous God (Exod. xx. 5; Deut. iv. 24), could by no means allow such declension to pass without some manifestation of displeasure. Besides, Jehovah, by covenant engagement with David, had expressly bound himself to chastise with rods any defection on the part of David's successors (2 Sam. vii. 14; Ps. cxxxix. 30). In the same way, though God, for Christ's sake, forgives the transgressions of believers, so that they shall not come into ultimate condemnation, he does not in every instance exempt them from suffering on account of their offences, but rather, as a rule, causes them, when they go astray, to feel such inward rebukes upon their consciences, and such outward inflictions upon their persons or estates, as to make them sensible of his holy anger, if not against their souls, against their sins (Acts xiv. 22; Rom. v. 3; 1 Cor. xi. 32; Heb. xii. 11). Already at Ramoth-Gilead Jehoshaphat had experienced a foretaste of Jehovah's wrath (ch. xviii. 31). Additional evidence thereof was soon to follow, in a Moabitish invasion (ch. xx. 1, etc.). 3. *A merciful mitigation.* While condemning the king's sins, Jehu did not forget to make candid acknowledgment of the king's virtues. To praise another for good qualities is not so easy as to blame another for bad ones. In others, faults are more readily discerned than favourable points; in ourselves, the latter more quickly than the former. Happily, the great Heart-searcher, while noting his people's shortcomings, overlooks not their well-doings. If Jehoshaphat's conduct in contracting alliance with Ahab was denounced, his behaviour in removing the groves from his land and preparing his heart to seek Jehovah was not forgotten. So of Christians, "God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love" (Heb. vi. 10), even though obliged to correct them for doing wrong (Heb. xii. 10); while Christ, sending his messages to the Churches in

Asia, with one exception never omits to notice in each case excellences worthy of commendation (Rev. iii., iv.).

LESSONS. 1. Gratitude for mercy. 2. Submission to rebuke. 3. Repentance for sin. 4. Watchfulness in duty. 5. Charity in judging others.—W.

Vers. 4—11.—*A royal reformer.* I. AN OLD WORK RESUMED. The reformation of religion (ver. 4). 1. *The reformer.* Jehoshaphat. Whether the work was done by special plenipotentiaries, as in the former instance (ch. xvii. 7, 8), or by the king in person, or, as is most probable, by both, the mainspring of this movement, as of the former, was Jehoshaphat; and for a sovereign of Judah it was certainly much more becoming occupation than feasting with Ahab or fighting with Benhadad. Such as are kings and priests unto God should study to walk worthy of their name and vocation (Eph. iv. 1; Phil. i. 27), and, for them, furthering the interests of religion amongst themselves and others, at home and abroad, is nobler employment (1 Cor. xv. 58; Gal. vi. 9; Titus iii. 1; 3 John 8) than revelling and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and jealousy (Rom. xiii. 14), after the example of the world. 2. *The reformed.* The people from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim. The king's efforts, though doubtless beginning at, were not limited to Jerusalem, but extended through the whole country from its southern to its northern limit. So Christ commanded his apostles, though beginning at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47), to go into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature (Mark xvi. 15). 3. *The reformation.* A return to the worship of Jehovah, the God of their fathers. This work, auspiciously begun some time before (ch. xvii. 3—9), but interrupted by the Ramoth-Gilead expedition, was now resumed by the humbled, presumably also enlightened and repentant, monarch. A good work in itself, it was likewise a right work, since he and his people were pledged by covenant to worship Jehovah (ch. xv. 12); a necessary work, if the kingdom was to be established and prosper; and a work which should neither be interrupted nor delayed, but completed with convenient speed.

II. A NEW WORK BEGUN. The establishment of courts of justice in the land (vers. 5—11). 1. *Provincial courts.* (1) The seats of the judges. The fortified cities throughout the land, because these were "the central points for the traffic of the districts in which they were situated" (Bertheau). (2) The work of the judges. To administer justice, not for man, but for Jehovah, *i.e.* to dispense not merely what man might reckon equity, but what was truly such in God's sight—cases submitted to them to decide, not at man's dictation, or in compliance with man's wishes, but "in the name and according to the will of the Lord" (Keil). (3) The duty of the judges. To act conscientiously, as in Jehovah's sight, having the fear of Jehovah and the dread of offending him constantly upon their spirits (Exod. xviii. 21; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3), especially shunning injustice and corruption, remembering that with Jehovah is no respect of persons or taking of bribes (Deut. x. 17; Job viii. 3; xxxiv. 19; Eph. vi. 9; 1 Pet. i. 17). (4) The Keeper of the judges. Jehovah. As the judgment they should give should be practically his judgment (Prov. xxix. 26), it must be beyond suspicion, commend itself to all who heard it as righteous (Ps. cxxix. 137), and be accepted by them to whom it was delivered as final (Rom. iii. 4; ix. 14; Rev. xvi. 5; xix. 2). Hence, if they entered on their duties in a right spirit, Jehovah would be with them to guide them in forming, speaking, and maintaining their judgments (Ps. xxv. 9; xlvi. 5; Prov. ii. 8; iii. 6). 2. *A supreme tribunal.* (1) Its locality. Jerusalem, the capital of the country, the proper seat of such a court. (2) Its object. For the judgment of the Lord and for controversies (ver. 8), or for "all matters of Jehovah," and "for all the king's matters" (ver. 11); *i.e.* for the hearing of appeals, and the settlement of disputes referred to it from the lower courts concerning religious or ecclesiastical affairs, as *e.g.* causes depending on decisions "between law and commandment, statutes and judgments," or on the interpretation and application of the laws of Moses; and, again, for similar verdicts in purely civil cases, as *e.g.* cases of murder and manslaughter, of consanguinity and inheritance, etc., all of which may be included in the phrase "between blood and blood." (3) Its constitution. Three orders of members—Levites, priests, heads of fathers' houses. Its courts two—an ecclesiastical, or religious, and a civil. Its presidents two—in the ecclesiastical court, Amariah the high priest, "described in 1 Chron. v. 37 as the fifth high priest from Zadok, the contemporary of

David" (Bertheau), though this is doubtful (Keil); in the civil court, Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the prince of the house of Judah, *i.e.* the tribal prince of Judah. Its assistants and servants, the Levites, *i.e.* such of them as had not been elected judges. (4) Its working. When a cause came before the judges, these were to warn the litigants not to trespass against Jehovah (which would practically be the same thing as putting them on oath to tell the truth), lest by sinning against Jehovah they should bring wrath upon themselves and their brethren; whilst the judges were themselves to dispense judgment in the fear of the Lord, or reverentially, faithfully, with a perfect heart or sincerely, and courageously—four qualities indispensable for an ideal judge—in which case the Lord would be with them to uphold their verdicts.

Learn: 1. The precedence that belongs to religion even in a commonwealth. Jehoshaphat cuts down idol-groves before he erects courts of law. 2. No administration of justice can be trusted that is not based on religion and the fear of God. 3. He that sits in a judicial chair should be sage, saint, and soldier, learned, devout, and courageous, all in one. 4. No system of dispensing equity can command confidence that does not admit of appeal from inferior to superior courts. 5. Judges should remember that they themselves also must one day be judged. 6. How much the jurisprudence of modern times is indebted to the Bible!—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XX.

Of this chapter, with its thirty-seven verses, only the six verses (31—36) find any duplicate or parallel in Kings (1 Kings xxii. 41—49). The chapter is occupied with a statement of the invasion of Judah by Moabites and Ammonites and certain problematical others (vers. 1, 2); with an account of the way in which the king and people prepared to meet the crisis (vers. 3—13); with the prophecy of Jahaziel the Levite as to how, under certain conditions, things would go (vers. 14—19); and with the narration of the victory and the manner of it (vers. 20—30); while the remaining verses partly summarize and then conclude the account of the life, character, and reign of Jehoshaphat.

Ver. 1.—The children of Moab. In 2 Kings iii. 5—27 we read of a rebellion on the part of Moab, and of the victory of Israel's king Joram, together with Jehoshaphat and the King of Edom, over Moab, now probably in quest of revenge. **Beside the Ammonites.** The reading of our Authorized Version here cannot stand. The Septuagint gives us some guidance in the name "the Minœi." By the mere transposing of one Hebrew character in the name Ammonites, we obtain the name Maonites (read מְעוּנִים for עַמּוֹנִים), *i.e.* the people of Maon, a town near Petra, no doubt Edomitish (see vers. 10, 22, 23), and possibly the same with the Septuagint *Minœi* (see also ch. xxvi. 7).

Ver. 2.—Beyond the sea on this side Aram (*Syria*): i.e. south-east of the Salt Sea, and something west of Edom (the right reading in place of *Aram*, where a *resh* had turned out a *daleth*). **Hazazon-tamar . . . Engedi**; *i.e.* the place Engedi (*Ain-jiddy*), a living "spring of water" from a lime-cliff, half-way up the west coast of the Salt Sea, "in the midst of palms" (*inter palmas*), the compound word "Hazazon-tamar" meaning literally, "the *division* of the palm."

Ver. 3.—Proclaimed a fast. This is the first recorded occasion of a general fast by royal proclamation, and of individual fasting it is remarkable that there is no record before the time and the act of Moses (as *e.g.* Exod. xxxiv. 28); after which, for individual fasting, come occasions like those of David (2 Sam. xii. 16) and Elijah (1 Kings xix. 8); for general fasting, occasions like those of Josh. vii. 6; Judg. xx. 26; 1 Sam. vii. 6; and for partial fasting, by semi-royal authority, that "proclaimed" by Jezebel (1 Kings xxi. 9, 12).

Ver. 4.—This verse expresses the response of all the kingdom to the proclamation of Jehoshaphat.

Ver. 5.—The new court (see ch. iv. 9; xv. 8).

Vers. 6—12.—The recorded prayers of Scripture are indeed what they might be expected to be, model prayers, and the present a model instance of the same (see homiletics). The prayer before us invokes the one God "in heaven;" claims him the God "of our fathers;" recites his universal authority above, below; pleads his former conduct of the "people Israel," in especial his establishing of that people in their present land; most touchingly recalls his covenant of condescending, everlasting "friendship" with Abraham, the grand original of the people (Gen. xviii.

17—19, 33; xvii. 2; Exod. xxxiii. 11); makes mention of the consecration of the land by the sanctuary, and in particular of the very service of consecration and the special foreseeing provision in that service for a crisis like the present (1 Kings viii. 33—45; ch. vi. 24—35; vii. 1); and then (vers. 10, 11) states pointedly the case and complaint with its aggravations (Deut. ii. 4, 8, 9, 19; Numb. xx. 21; Judg. xi. 18), and with a parting appeal, confession of their own weakness, ignorance, and dependence unfeigned, commits the cause of the alarmed people to God. **Our eyes are upon thee.** So, with a multitude of other passages, that supreme pattern one, Ps. cxxiii. 2.

Ver. 13.—If the whole narration called for one more touch, it has it in the pathetic, brief, telling graphicness of this verse. **Their little ones.** The familiar Hebrew word (טַפָּם) is expressive of the quick, tripping step of the young and of women. Gesenius would regard it in this passage as designating the whole *family* as distinguished from the head of it, and as amplified by "wives" and "children" instanced afterward, quoting the very insufficient support of Gen. xlvii. 12. Our text occurs again in ch. xxxi. 18.

Ver. 14.—**Jahaziel.** This Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, is not mentioned elsewhere. His genealogy is traced to *Mattaniah*, i.e. Nethaniah (1 Chron. xxv. 2), who is parallel with Amariah of 1 Chron. vi. 11. It is very possible that Ps. lxxxiii., which is a psalm of Asaph, and which mentions the enmity of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, may be synchronous with this history.

Ver. 15.—**The battle is not yours, but God's;** *i.e.* God will do the fighting (see ver. 17, *first* and *third* clauses); so also 1 Sam. xvii. 47.

Ver. 16.—**The cliff of Ziz.** Read with Revised Version, *the ascent of Ziz* (or probably *Hazziz*), a place named only here. The Hebrew word here rendered "cliff" is the familiar מַעֲלֵה, meaning "an ascent," or "a rising ground." It is replaced in the Septuagint by both *ἀνάβασις* and *πρόσβασις*. Stanley, in an interesting note on the word ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 500, edit. 1866), says it is applied to several localities in Palestine, viz.: (1) The "Ascent of Akrabbim," i.e. *scorpions* (Numb. xxxiv. 4; Judg. i. 36; Josh. xv. 3), on the south border of Judah and probably the same as the Pass of Safeh. (2) "The going up to (or *of*) Adummim," *i.e.* the "ascent of the Red," near Gilgal, on border of Judah and Benjamin (Josh. xv. 7; xviii. 17), probably the same with the "Pass of Jericho." (3) The "going up to Gur" (2 Kings ix. 27). (4) Our present text. (5) The "mounting up of Luhith" in Moab (Isa. xv. 5; Jer. xlviii. 5). The word is also applied to the steep pass from Gibeon to Beth-horon (Josh. x. 10; 1 Macc. iii. 16); to the road up the Mount of Olives (2 Sam. xv. 30); and to the approach to the city in which Samuel anointed Saul (1 Sam. ix. 11), *i.e.* "the hill up to the city." The passage, Judg. viii. 13, Authorized Version "before the sun was up," Revised Version "from the ascent of Heres," possibly designates a *rising ground*, named "the Ascent of the Sun," or, "of Heres." The following extract from Keil, with its quotations from Robinson, is interesting. "The wilderness Jezreel was without doubt the name of a part of the great stretch of flat country bounded on the south by the Waddy El Ghar, and extending from the Dead Sea to the neighbourhood of Tekoa, which is now called *El Hassasah*, after a waddy on its northern side. The whole country on the west side of the Dead Sea, 'where it does not consist of mountain ridges or deep valleys, is high table-land sloping gradually towards the east, wholly waste, merely covered here and there by a few bushes and without the slightest trace of having ever been cultivated' (Robinson's 'Palest.,' *sub voce*). Our present ascent of Ziz, or Hazziz, has perhaps remained in the Waddy El Hassasah. . . . Robinson takes it to be the pass, which at present leads from Ain-jiddy to the table-land. Yet it is described by him as a 'fearful pass,' and it can hardly be thought of here even if the enemy like the Bedouins, now when on their forays, may be supposed to have marched along the shore of the sea, and ascended to the table-land only at Engedi; for the Israelites did not meet the enemy in this ascent, but *above* upon the table-land." Josephus translates הַצִּיץ by *ἐξοχῆς*, but with no legitimate justification. **The end of the brook;** *i.e.* rather the end of the brook-way, or course of the brook when there was water to make one.

Ver. 17.—**Stand . . . and see the salvation of the Lord with you.** The grand original of these words (Exod. xiv. 13) would be known to both Jahaziel and Jehoshaphat.

Ver. 18.—The infinite relief to the mind of Jehoshaphat and his people finds now fit expression in simple adoration. Would that such first gratitude were but sustained to the end more frequently than it is common to find the case!

Ver. 19.—**Of the children of the Korhites;** *i.e.*, with Revised Version, *of the Korahites*, who were the best of the Kohathite family (1 Chron. vi. 22; also at head of Ps. xlii.—xlix., Authorized Version and Revised Version). Keil would translate, "Of the sons of Kohath, yea, of the Korahites."

Ver. 20.—**The wilderness of Tekoa.** The king and people, army and prophet and Levite singers, start early for the wilderness of Tekoa, not less than ten miles' distance south of Jerusalem, and from it a waddy running to the Dead Sea. **So shall ye be established.** (So Isa. vii. 9.) Jehoshaphat's own faith and zeal make him nervously anxious that his people should not fall behind him, and fall short of their duty and the grandeur of the occasion.

Ver. 21.—**And when he had consulted with the people;** *i.e.* possibly simply "conferred with" those who were over the singers, as to who should be the most prominent in leading the service of praise, or as to what should be the words sung and other like matters of detail; or more probably, considering the exact form of language used, the reference is to what we are told Jehoshaphat had *just* done, to wit, counselled well the people and given good advice to them. **Praise the beauty of holiness.** The rendering should no doubt be *in the beauty of holiness*, i.e. in garments of beauty (1 Chron. xvi. 29; Ps. xxix. 2; Revised Version margin, "in holy array"). **Praise the Lord;** Revised Version, *give thanks to the Lord* (ch. v. 13; vii. 3, 6; Ps. cvi.; cxxxvi.).

Ver. 22.—**Set ambushments.** The Hebrew is נֹתֵן מְאָרְבִים, *i.e.* "set persons lying in wait," or "in ambush" (piel part. plur. of אָרַב). So Judg. ix. 25, but kal participle with apparently future equivalent meaning occurs eighteen times in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Ezra, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. Who the persons were, supernatural or not, or what their mode of operation, is not told, and is not plain. The effects are quite plain—that *first* the two confederates, Moab and Ammon, thought they saw reason to fall on them "of Mount Seir;" and *secondly*, having this done, to fall on one another to the end of mutual extermination. **They were smitten.** The marginal, "they smote one another," may be better, but it is not at all necessary, the meaning being that collectively they became the smitten instead of the smiters!

Ver. 23.—*This* verse proceeds to explain *how* this resulted in a kind of triangular duel on large scale.

Ver. 24.—**The watch-tower.** See ch. xxvi. 10, where, however, the ordinary מִגְדָּל, and not the present word (only found, except as a proper name, here and Isa. xxi. 8), is employed. It is scarcely likely that a built watch-tower is intended even here, but rather a lofty site and point of view from which a large number of people could see. The proper names Mitzpeh (*Mizpeh*) and Mitzpah (*Mizpah*) are of course familiar. **They looked unto the multitude.** Judah and its army and heralding Levite singers would see now in new significance the thing said by Jahaziel in our ver. 16, "Ye shall find them at the end of the brook-course, before the wilderness of Jeruel." **And none escaped;** *i.e.* "without an exception."

Ver. 25.—**Both riches with the dead bodies.** The Hebrew text reads literally, *both riches and dead bodies* (no article). The וּפְגָרִים of the text, however, appears in several ("old authorities," Revised Version) manuscripts, as וּבְגָדִים ("garments"), and the versions of both Septuagint and Vulgate lend their authority to this reading. **Jewels.** The Hebrew term is כְּלִי, the most frequent rendering of which is "vessels," so rendered, that is, a hundred and sixty times out of about three hundred and eight times in all of its occurrence. It is, however, a word of very generic quality, and is rendered as here "jewels" about twenty-five other times. It would seem nugatory to tell us that there were "dead bodies," in the bald rendering of "and dead bodies." Our Authorized Version rendering, "riches *with* the dead bodies," of course both ingeniously glosses the difficulty and makes a sufficiently good meaning.

Ver. 26.—**Berachah.** This is just the Hebrew fem. subst. from a verb. It is used in 1 Chron. xii. 3 as the name of a man. The present name of the valley survives in the Waddy *Bereikat* on the Hebron road, beyond, therefore, the date unto this day of the writer.

Ver. 27.—**The Lord had made them to rejoice.** Note the extremely similar and almost identical language of Ezra vi. 22 and Neh. xii. 43, and add also to the comparison the last sentence of our ver. 29.

Ver. 29.—With this verse compare particularly vers. 10, 11 of ch. xvii.

Ver. 30.—**His God gave him rest** (so see ch. xv. 15).

Ver. 31.—With this verse recommences the parallel of 1 Kings xxii. 41—50. In this verse we find the addition in the parallel very naturally to be accounted for, of "began to reign in the fourth year of Ahab King of Israel." Otherwise the verses are almost identical. Of Azubah nothing more is heard.

Ver. 33.—**Howbeit the high places . . . the people had not prepared.** The statements so precisely made in this verse evidently serve the purpose of distinguishing between the wishes and orders of the king and the unequal conduct of his people.

Ver. 34.—**The rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, etc.** These "acts of Jehoshaphat" are said in this verse to find their record in the book of Jehu . . . mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel. The parallel has, "in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah." For our "mentioned," note margin, literal, "made to ascend" and Revised Version "inserted." The "book of the kings of Israel" may (note also the remarkable apparent misnomers of our writer, as illustrated by ch. xii. 6; xxi. 2, 4) very possibly be one with the parallel, "book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" (see our 'Introduction,' 1 Chronicles, pp. vii., viii.). Of this larger collected cyclopædia of royal biography, Jehu's account (דִּבְרֵי) of Jehoshaphat was one component part. Though Jehu's (דִּבְרֵי) *book* is not mentioned elsewhere, he himself is particularly in 1 Kings xvi. 1, as well as in our ch. xix. 2.

Ver. 35.—**And after this.** The historical episode of these three verses (35—37) is evidently misplaced. As Ahaziah succeeded his father Ahab in Jehoshaphat's seventeenth year, we of course are at no loss to fix the time of Jehoshaphat's "joining himself with Ahaziah." He had "joined himself" with Ahab, and had smarted for it, and yet "after" that, he "joined himself" with his son Ahaziah. We do not doubt that the "who" of this verse refers to Ahaziah, not, as some think, to Jehoshaphat.

Ver. 36.—This verse tells us the object with which Jehoshaphat had joined himself with Ahaziah, and 1 Kings xxii. 49 tells us how at last, by a point-blank refusal to Ahaziah, he withdrew from the very brief commercial alliance after he had not merely been witnessed against by the Prophet Eliezer spoken of in our next verse, but more decisively witnessed against by the shattering of his ships. **To go to Tarshish.** This clause, even if the text is not corrupt, yet cannot mean what it *seems* to say; but in the word "to go" (Hebrew, לָלֶכֶת) must mean, of the sort that were wont to go to Tarshish, *i.e.* that were used for the Tarshish trade. We are guided to some such explanation by 1 Kings xxii. 48, where it is said the ships were "ships *of* Tarshish to go *to Ophir*" (1 Kings x. 22; ch. viii. 18). That the ships could not be to go to Tarshish is plain from the fact of the place, Ezion-geber (ch. viii. 17, 18; 1 Kings ix. 26), on the Red Sea, where they were built. Some, however, have suggested that some other Tarshish (*e.g.* in the Gulf of Persia) than that of Spain (*Tartessus*) may conceivably be meant. The clear statement of the parallel saves the necessity of any such supposition, however.

Ver. 37.—**Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah.** Nothing beside is known of this prophet. For Mareshah, see ch. xi. 8, and note there. The ships were broken; *i.e.* presumably by some storm. One general remark may be made upon these verses (34—37), together with vers. 45—50 of 1 Kings xxii., viz. that the dislocation of both manner and matter, observable in *both* of them, probably betrays something out of order for whatever reason or accident, in the more original source, from which both drew, the apparently disjointed mixture of matter in the parallel being the more patent of the two

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—37.—*The last chapter in Jehoshaphat's career.* The aspects in which the character of Jehoshaphat offers itself to our view, in the last seen of him, are now to be considered. Few men there are who bear themselves well in prosperity, especially if the prosperity be great; and many there are who fail to submit well to the discipline of adversity. Of this latter weakness of human nature it can scarcely be said that Jehoshaphat was an illustration. The punishment that had been foretold, that solemn consequence, at any rate, of "helping the ungodly, and loving them that hate the Lord; therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord" (ch. xix. 2), now impended; and almost the entirety of what remains to be recorded respecting Jehoshaphat is occupied with the subject in this chapter, of the manner in which Jehoshaphat met his evil days. He did not defy them, he did not aggravate them, he did not make them a case of hopeless repining; he met them in a calm, brave, religious spirit. The indications and the proofs of this are noticeable as follows.

I. THE ALARM OF WHAT WAS COMING IS ATTENDED TO AT ONCE, AND IS AT ONCE PREPARED FOR. (Vers. 1—4.)

II. THE IMMEDIATE FIRST PREPARATION IS THE RESORT TO PRAYER. In the presence of all "the congregation of Judah and Benjamin, in the house of the Lord," when "all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children" (vers. 5, 13), prayer is made to God—prayer that recounts his great attributes; that claims his Fatherhood as vouchsafed by promise and covenant of old; that rehearses his mighty works; that lays faith's clinging hold upon the comparatively recently built and consecrated and dedicated temple, with all that it involved; that finds an argument, even, in the specially ungrateful turpitude of the foe, who now is the attacking party; and that closes with an unreserved and a beautiful expression of confidence in God and utter self-distrust (vers. 5—12).

III. THE PROMISE, BY WHICH THAT PRAYER IS ANSWERED, IS TAKEN HOLD OF, IS GRATEFULLY GRASPED, IS UNFALTERINGLY BELIEVED. The promise is a *very* gracious one, a most liberal one, conveyed in a very inspiriting and encouraging manner, and Jehoshaphat is overwhelmed with the impression of it (ver. 18).

IV. JEHOSHAPHAT AND THE PEOPLE AND THE LEVITES, ALL WITH ONE ACCORD ACCEPT IT WITH SUCH FAITH, THAT JOY AND PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING ARE ALL RENDERED BY ANTICIPATION. (Vers. 14—19.) The inspired Levite had communicated the promise, and had added to it all encouragement and exhortation, in the first place; but we read that Jehoshaphat himself took up after him both these ministries in the presence of the people, and in his great desire to keep them thoroughly up to the mark (vers. 20, 21).

V. WHEN THE PROMISE IS FULFILLED TO THE MOST SIGNAL EXTENT, THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF IT, AND DUE THANKSGIVING FOR IT, ARE NOT FORGOTTEN, AND ARE NOT STINTED; BUT TO THE MEASURE OF HUMAN ABILITY CORRESPOND WITH IT. The testimony of this is explicit and repeated, while the *description* of it is exceedingly graphic (vers. 26—28).

VI. THE FINAL TESTIMONY TO THE CONSISTENT, HONEST ENDEAVOUR OF THE LIFE OF JEHOSHAPHAT, THE SOLIDITY OF HIS WORK, AND THE BLESSING THAT RESTED UPON IT FROM ABOVE. It is most true that the work of Jehoshaphat had not been absolutely perfect, inasmuch as he had not absolutely succeeded (ver. 33) in what nevertheless he had earnestly and conscientiously endeavoured (ch. xvii. 6). And it is most true that his character and life and work had not been absolutely perfect, inasmuch as his defection in regard of his intimacy with Ahab—now strangely repeated in the lesser instance of Ahaziah and "the ships of Tarshish" (vers. 35—37)—stands against him. This latter also met with its punishment (ver. 37); but we may judge that it was acknowledged and repented of in the best way, by being forsaken (1 Kings xxii. 49). Yet we cannot be wrong to follow, with the tenor of the testimony of the mingled faithfulness and graciousness of Scripture biography, and say that, like its ultimate Inspirer and Author, it loves to "forgive transgression," and to "cover sin," and that the last note of Jehoshaphat is that his heart was right, that he "did that which was right," and that he and his work were graciously accepted of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The source of safety in the hour of peril.* Very suddenly does the scene change in these chronicles of the kingdom of Judah. From the peaceful and pleasant duty of completing the arrangements for securing justice throughout the land, Jehoshaphat was driven to consider the alarming intelligence that a powerful combination of enemies was threatening the independence of his kingdom. We learn from these facts—

I. THAT WE MAY SUDDENLY FIND OURSELVES IN MOST SERIOUS PERIL. Judah does not seem to have done anything to provoke this attack, or to have had any reason to expect it. It came upon them like a clap of thunder in a clear sky. Such things do occur to nations, to Churches, to families, to individual men. In some wholly unexpected quarter a grave difficulty arises. That power which should have been an ally suddenly becomes an enemy; that very institution which had been the source of sustenance threatens to drag us down with itself into financial ruin; the very men who promised to be, and who were, our best friends on whom we could rely, turn into our opponents and thwart our purposes; the bright, the brilliant morning has become a clouded noon, and a severe storm impends. Unhappily all history, observation, and experience will furnish abundant proof that this is not a remarkably exceptional, but an occasional or even a frequent occurrence in human life. It is a possibility that has so much of probability about it that we do well to be prepared for it lest we should be called to face it.

II. THAT OUR TRUE REFUGE IS IN GOD. 1. But if that is to be so, we must be *in a right relation* to him. We must be able to say, with a deep significance, not only "O Lord God of our fathers," but also "Art not thou *our* God?" (vers. 6, 7). We must be true children of Abraham, who was himself the "friend of God" (ver. 7). We must be distinctly and definitely on the Lord's side; we must be with Christ and not against him (Matt. xii. 30). We cannot look for the delivering grace of God if we have not been reconciled unto him through Jesus Christ, if we have remained amongst those whose "sin has separated between them and their God." 2. Then there must be a *consciousness of rectitude* under the special circumstances. Jehoshaphat could plead that he and his people were in the land as rightful possessors of the soil; they inherited from God himself (ver. 11), and these invaders were wholly in the wrong; their attack was utterly indefensible (ver. 10). The king could plead that the cause of Judah was just and right. This consciousness of integrity *we* also must have, if we would fall back on God. "If our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God" (1 John iii. 21); but otherwise we cannot raise our hopes. We cannot ask him to intervene on behalf of a cause which is one of unrighteousness, or one in which we have been acting quite unworthily of our Lord and Leader. 3. We must bring to God the *attitude of conscious dependence.* "Our eyes are upon thee," we must be able to say, sincerely (Ps. xxvii. 1; xlvi. 1; lxii. 5, 6). 4. We should *be united* in our attitude and action. "*All* Judah stood before the Lord, with their wives and little ones" (ver. 13). It is not only the leaders or the representatives that should make their appeal to God. Let all the people, let the "little ones," whose presence and whose prayer might not seem to be so essential, appear before God and join in seeking his help.

III. THAT WE MUST MAKE DIRECT AND EARNEST APPEAL TO HIM. Jehoshaphat took active measures to enlist the intervention of Jehovah; he "set himself to seek the Lord," etc. (vers. 3—6). It behoves us, in the day of our trial and our peril, to take active measures to secure the merciful and mighty succour of our God. We must make our *earnest* and our *persevering appeal* to him, and be waiting *upon* while we wait *for* him. And our appeal will, at any rate, be threefold. We shall plead: 1. *Our utter helplessness* apart from his effectuating power. "We have no might," etc. (ver. 12). We shall, of course, be alert, diligent, energetic; we shall put forth all our skill and strength; but we shall feel that all will be wholly unavailing except our God works with us and through us. 2. *His almighty power.* (Vers. 6, 7.) 3. *His Divine faithfulness.* (Vers. 6—9.) We also, like the King of Judah, can plead the inviolable word of our Lord. He has promised to be with us, to provide for us, to guide us through all our journey, to give us the victory over our enemies, to reward our faithful labour with a blessed increase; "And none shall find his promise vain."—C.

Ver. 7.—*Friendship with God.* "Abraham thy friend." 1. Before Jesus came to reveal God to our race as he did reveal him, the Eternal One was known and worshipped *chiefly* as the Almighty One, or as the Creator of all things, or as the Divine Sovereign, whose rule we are bound to obey. *Not exclusively;* for he was known as the Father of men (see Deut. xxxii. 6; 1 Chron. xxix. 10; Isa. lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8; Ps. ciii. 13). Here also he is spoken of as a Friend (and see Isa. xli. 8; Jas. ii. 23). But it is evident that it was only in a restricted sense, and by a very limited number, that God was thus apprehended. 2. It was Jesus Christ that revealed the Father *as* the Father of souls; it was he who taught us to address him as such, to think and speak of him as such, to approach him and to live before him as such. 3. It is Jesus Christ also who has enabled us to think and to feel toward God as our Friend. "I have called you friends," he said to his disciples (John xv. 15). And he has so related himself to us that in him we can recognize God as our Divine Friend; as One of whom we may rightly speak, and toward whom we may venture to feel and to act as our Friend indeed. But on what ground and in what respects? On the ground of—

I. RECIPROCATED LOVE; including, what all true love must include, both *affection* and *trust.* God *loves* us. He loves us with parental affection, as his children who were once indeed estranged from him, but are now reconciled unto him; as those who have become endeared to him, both by his great sacrifice for their sake, and by their seeking after him and surrender of themselves to him. And God *trusts* us. He does not treat us as slaves, but as sons; he does not lay down a strict and severe code of rules by which our daily conduct is to be regulated; he gives us a few broad principles, and he trusts us to apply them to our own circumstances. We, in return, love and trust him. Not having seen him, but having understood his character and his disposition toward us in Jesus Christ, having realized how great and all-surpassing was his kindness toward us in him (Titus iii. 4), we love him in response (1 John iv. 19). And in him, in his faithfulness and in his wisdom and in his goodness, we have an unfaltering trust. Thus we have the reciprocal love of friendship.

II. CLOSE RESEMBLANCE OF CHARACTER AND SYMPATHY. There cannot be friendship worthy of the name where there is not this. Our character and our sympathies must be essentially alike, must be substantially the same. And so it is with the Divine Lord and those who worthily bear his Name. His character is theirs; his principles are theirs; his sympathies are theirs. What he loves and what he hates, they love and they hate. Towards all that to which (and towards all those to whom) he is drawn, they are drawn; that which repels him repels them. Here is the true basis of friendship, and even that distance of nature that separates the Divine from the human is no barrier in the way. Being so essentially like Christ as his true followers are, they are his friends and he is theirs.

III. ONENESS OF AIM AND ACTION. Friendship is established and nourished by a common aim and by fellow-labouring. They who join heart and hand in any noble enterprise become united together in strong bonds of true companionship. It is so with our Master and ourselves. He is engaged in the sublime task of recovering a lost world to the knowledge, the love, the likeness of God; so are we. He has laboured and suffered to achieve that most glorious end; so do we. We are "workers together with him." His cause is ours; he and we are bent on the fulfilment of the same great purpose; and while he works through us and in us, he also *works with* us in this greatest and noblest of all earthly aims. "We are labourers together with God" (1 Cor. iii. 9); "We then, as workers together with him" (2 Cor. vi. 1). We are his friends. Let us: 1. Realize how high is the honour he has thus conferred upon us. 2. See that we walk worthily of such a lofty estate. 3. Take care that we never do that or become that which will make us forfeit so great a heritage. Let us be found faithful as the friends of God.—C.

Vers. 14—19.—*Before the battle: lessons.* Having made their appeal to the Lord God of their fathers, Judah now waited for God. Nor had the king and his subjects to wait long. We have here an instance of—

I. GOD'S READINESS TO ANSWER THE PRAYER OF HIS PEOPLE. "In the midst of the congregation," while they were still before the Lord, in the very act and attitude of prayer, an answer was vouchsafed to them. While they were yet speaking, God heard (Isa. lxv. 24). Though he does not constantly grant us so speedy a response, yet we may be quite sure that he always hearkens and heeds; and if there be such reverence and faith as there were on this occasion, we may be sure that God always *purposes at once* to send us the best kind of deliverance, even if he does not at once start the train of events or forces that will bring it to pass.

II. THAT WE NEED NOT BE GREATLY AFFECTED BY MERE MAGNITUDE. "Be not afraid by reason of this great multitude" (ver. 15). We are in no little danger of overestimating the worth of numbers, whether they be on our side or against us. It is a great mistake to imagine we are safe because we are in a large majority. There is no king and there is no cause "saved by the multitude of an host" (Ps. xxxiii. 16). History has shown again and again that the presence of a vast number of people (soldiers or supporters) often begets confidence, and confidence begets carelessness and negligence, and these lead down to defeat and ruin. Besides, it is never quantity but quality, never size but spirit, never numbers but character, that decides the day. Better the small band of fearless men under Gideon's command, than the large numbers of the faint-hearted who were left behind, or even than the innumerable host of the Midianites. We may not trust in the number of our friends, and we need not fear the hosts of our enemies. If the "battle is not to the strong," it certainly is not to the multitudinous.

III. THAT IT IS EVERYTHING TO HAVE GOD ON OUR SIDE. We may be sure that when the people of Judah had this assurance from Jahaziel, they were not only calmed and comforted, but they had a sense that all would be well with them. 1. That God had made their cause his own. "The battle is not yours, but God's" (ver. 15). 2. That God's presence would be granted to them. "The Lord will be with you" (ver. 17). 3. That God had promised them his salvation, and would therefore work on their behalf. "The salvation of the Lord" (ver. 17). This was enough even for the timid and the fearful-hearted. This should be enough for us. Conscious that the battle we fight is that of the Lord himself, and is not ours only or chiefly; knowing that he will be with us, and assured that he will work out a blessed issue, we may be calm, and even confident, though the enemy is advancing.

IV. THAT WE MUST BE READY TO TAKE OUR PART AND TO DO OUR WORK, whatever that may be. "Go ye down against them" (ver. 16); "Set yourselves, stand ye still" (ver. 17). To do this may have been too much for the inclination of the cowardly or the indulgent; it may have been too little for the active and the militant among the people; but it was enough for the obedient and the trustful. God will have us bring our contribution of activity as well as devotion to the great spiritual campaign. But it may not be just that *kind* or just that *measure* which we should select if we had our choice. We must let him choose our service as well as our inheritance (Ps. xlvii. 4) for us; and whether that be high or humble, greater or smaller, we should be more than content that he is calling us to the field in which Christ is our Captain.

V. THAT A SPIRIT OF REVERENT GRATITUDE IS ALWAYS BECOMING. (Vers. 18, 19.) Before the shouts of victory are in the air, while we are going forth to the battle in which God is leading us, while we are serving under a Divine Saviour, while we are anticipating the issue, so long as we are *trustful in him* and *not confident in ourselves*, we do well to let our hearts be filled and to let our songs be heard with reverent joy.—C.

Vers. 23—37.—*At and after the battle: lessons.* Armed with a holy trust in God, the king and his people advanced to meet their multitudinous enemies with bounding heart and tuneful lip. Nor were they unwarranted in so doing; the event completely justified their hopes. We learn—

I. THAT OUR ENEMIES SOMETIMES DISPOSE OF ONE ANOTHER. (Ver. 23.) We sometimes find that the enemy is best "left well alone." Let Shimei "cast stones" at us; even though they be words of false accusation, they will do him much more harm than they will do us. Let the enemy blaspheme; his profanities will be a dead weight in his own balances. Let men make virulent attacks on our holy religion; they will answer one another; we can better spend our time (as a rule) in positive endeavours to build up the kingdom of God.

II. That, under God's hand, THE EVIL WE FEAR IS MORE THAN BALANCED BY THE GOOD WE GAIN. When the Jewish army returned from the wilderness of Tekoa, richly laden with spoil (ver. 25), they would doubtless have said that it was much better for them to have had their agitation followed by their success than not to have had any invasion of the enemy. They certainly congratulated themselves upon the entire incident, and, in their hearts, blessed those Moabites and Ammonites for giving them such an opportunity of enrichment. When God is on our side we may expect that our dangers will disappear, and that from the things that threaten us we shall ultimately derive blessing. Such is now and ever "the end of the Lord" (John v. 11; Job xlii. 10). Only we must make quite sure that God *is* on our side; and this we can only do by making a full surrender of ourselves to him and to his service, and by seeing to it that we choose the side of righteousness and of humanity, and not that of selfishness and of guilty pride.

III. THAT GOODNESS OF HEART SHOULD FIRST TAKE THE FORM OF GRATITUDE. Whither but to "the house of the Lord" should that jubilant procession move? (ver. 28). Gladness finds its best utterance in sacred song, its best home in the sanctuary of God. Thus and there it will be chastened; it will be pure, it will be moderated, it will leave no sting of guilty memories behind. Moreover, if we are not first grateful to God for our mercies, but rather gratulatory of ourselves, we shall nurse a spirit of complacency that is likely to lead us astray from the humility which is our rectitude and our wisdom.

IV. THAT IT IS WELL WHEN OUR TRIUMPH IS LOST IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THE CAUSE OF GOD. It was much that Jerusalem was safe; but it was more that "the fear of God was on all the kingdoms" (ver. 29). We may heartily rejoice that our own person, our own family, our own country, has been preserved; we may much more rejoice when the cause and kingdom of Christ has been greatly advanced. This should be *the* object of our solicitude and of our rejoicing.

V. THAT REST IS THE RIGHTFUL PURCHASE OF LABOUR AND OF STRIFE. (Ver. 30.) The country that has won its religious liberty by heroic suffering and strife (as with Holland) may well settle down to a long period of rest and peace. The man who has gone through several decades of anxious and laborious activity may well enjoy a long evening of life when the burden is laid down and the sword is sheathed. The quieter service of the later years of life seems a fitting prelude to the peaceful and untiring activities which constitute the rest of immortality.

VI. THAT THE WORTHIEST HUMAN LIVES DO NOT CORRESPOND TO OUR IDEAL. If we were to construct an ideal human life, we should *not* introduce another unwise combination (ver. 37) and a disastrous expedition to cast a shadow on its closing years. Yet this was the case with Jehoshaphat. Our lives, even at their best, do not answer to our conceptions of what is perfectly beautiful and complete. We must not look for this, for we shall very seldom find even the appearance of it. We must take the good man as God gives him to us, with a true soul, with a brave spirit, with a kind and faithful heart, with a character that is very fair and perhaps very fine, but that leaves something to be desired; with a life that is very useful and perhaps very noble, but that bears marks of blemish even to the end.—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*An alarm of war—an invasion from the East.* I. A STARTLING REPORT. The safety of Jehoshaphat's empire was threatened by a formidable foe. 1. *The composition of the enemy.* (Ver. 1.) (1) The children of Moab. Descendants of Lot and his elder daughter (Gen. xix. 37). Their territory lay east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and had for its northern boundary first the Jabbok (Deut. ii. 20), and afterwards the Arnon (Numb. xxi. 13—26), the modern *Wâdy Môjeb*, opposite Engedi. After the conquest a large portion of this region was occupied by the tribe of Reuben, which caused the Moabites to put forth long-continued efforts to recover their lost possessions. This they did soon after Joshua's death, and even acquired ascendancy over Israel until their yoke was broken by Ehud (Judg. iii. 12, etc.). In Saul's time troublesome, they were by David completely subdued (1 Sam. xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 2). Under Solomon or the first kings of Israel they must have again broken loose, for they were once more reduced by Omri, who, according to the Moabite inscription, "took the land of Medeba, and occupied it in his days and his son's days forty years" ('Records,' etc., xi. 166). On the accession of Jehoram, Ahab's son, to the Israelitish throne, Mesha, the son of Chemoshgad, rebelled and successfully asserted his independence (2 Kings iii. 5). (2) The children of Ammon. Likewise descendants of Lot (Gen. xix. 38). These originally occupied the same region as their kinsmen, the Moabites, but were eventually "obliged to retreat eastwards to the water-shed (Deut. ii 37), where they remained in the mountains, in a district not annexed by Israel, in which their name is still preserved at Amman, the ancient Rabbath-Ammon (Numb. xxi. 24)" (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 237). The Ammonites worshipped the supreme Being, under the name of Moloch or Milcom (1 Kings xi. 7). (3) The Ammonites. Probably the Mennites, or Maonites (ch. xxvi. 7)—"a tribe whose head-quarters were the city of Maan, in the neighbourhood of Petra, to the east of the Wâdy Musa" (Keil); they are afterwards described as "inhabitants of Mount Seir" (vers. 22, 23). 2. *The number of their army.* "A great multitude" (ver. 2) had often before assailed Israel (ch. xiv. 11; Judg. vi. 5; Josh. xi. 4), and afterwards did assail Judah (ch. xxxii. 7). When Solomon spoke of Israel as a people like the dust for multitude (ch. i. 9), it was rhetoric. 3. *The place of their encampment.* Hazazon-tamar, or "the pruning of the palm tree" (Gen. xiv. 7)—"a name probably preserved in that of the tract called *Hasâsah*, 'pebbles' near 'Ain-Jidy" (Conder, p. 414)—otherwise Engedi, or "fountain of the kid," the modern *'Ain-Jidy*—was situated on the west coast of the Dead Sea, about the middle and directly opposite the mountains of Moab. "Few landscapes are more impressive than the sudden unfolding of the Dead Sea basin and its eastern wall from the top of the pass of Engedi" (Tristram, in 'Picturesque Palestine,' iii. 191). The allied forces had probably not crossed the lake (Josephus), but rounded its southern extremity.

II. AN UNEASY APPREHENSION. The fear felt by Jehoshaphat was justified by a variety of circumstances. 1. *The character of the invasion.* It was the first time Jehoshaphat's kingdom had been exposed to the horrors of war within its own borders. Heretofore Judah's campaigns had been beyond the limits of her own territory, as at Ramoth-Gilead (ch. xviii. 28). Foreign wars are apt to be invested with a spurious glory; war at home discovers its repulsive features to all. When a land becomes a battle-field, then—

> "All her husbandry doth lie on heaps,
> Corrupting in its own fertility.
> Her vine, the merry cheerer of the heart,
> Unprunèd dies," etc.
> ('King Henry V.,' act v. sc. 2.)

2. *The combination of powers.* It was three against one; yet Jehoshaphat had no scruples in combining formerly with Ahab against Benhadad, or afterwards with Israel and Edom against Moab (2 Kings iii. 7). "With what measure ye mete," etc. (Matt. vii. 7), applies to kingdoms and kings no less than to private individuals. 3. *The prediction of Jehu.* Hanani's son had spoken of wrath upon Jehoshaphat for helping Ahab: was this invasion a fulfilment of that threatening? Jehoshaphat might well tremble as he turned his thoughts southward to Engedi.

III. A PRUDENT RESOLVE. In the sudden and dangerous emergency Jehoshaphat concluded to do three things. 1. *To set himself to seek the Lord.* So David had commanded Israel (1 Chron. xvi. 10; Ps. cv. 3) and Solomon (1 Chron. xxii. 19), if they would prosper as people and sovereign. So had Oded's son, Azariah, directed Asa and his subjects if they would protect themselves against all future assailants (ch. xv. 2). So Asa and his subjects did; and the Lord gave them rest round about. Jehoshaphat, perhaps recalling these details of national history, possibly also remembering how disastrously he had fared by going up against Benhadad without Jehovah's help, decided that the first thing to do was to draw more closely together the alliance between himself and Jehovah, by a more diligent observance of worship and a more faithful performance of duty. Like all sincere reformers, whether in Church or state, Jehoshaphat began with himself (Luke iv. 23; Rom. ii. 21—23), and began in earnest, setting his heart in it as a work he delighted in and intended to carry through. 2. *To proclaim a fast throughout all Judah.* Fasting a usual accompaniment of religious exercises in Israel, especially in times of anxiety and distress, whether individual or national. Witness the cases of David (2 Sam. xii. 16, 21), Esther (iv. 16), Nehemiah (i. 4), Daniel (ix. 3), Darius (Dan. vi. 18), and of the Jews at Mizpeh (Judg. xx. 26; 1 Sam. vii. 6), the returning exiles at Ahava (Ezra viii. 21), and the Ninevites (Jonah iii. 5). It was intended as a sign of self-humiliation, an expression of sorrow, and a confession of guilt. 3. *To hold a national convention at Jerusalem.* Whether he actually summoned the heads and representatives of the people, as Asa previously did (ch. xv. 9), is not stated; but the princes, chiefs of the fathers' houses, and principal men out of all the cities of Judah hastened to the capital to ask help of Jehovah in the crisis that had arisen.

LESSONS. 1. The hostility of the world-powers to the Church of God, exemplified in this combination against Judah. 2. The distinction between fear and cowardice in front of danger, illustrated by the behaviour of Jehoshaphat. 3. The place and value of fasting in religion. 4. The best defence for a nation in the time of peril—prayer and piety. 5. The duty and advantage of kings and peoples standing shoulder to shoulder when their safety is threatened.—W.

Vers. 5—19.—*The prayer of Jehoshaphat.* I. THE SCENE. 1. *The place.* (1) Jerusalem, the metropolis of the land, whose safety was imperilled. (2) The house of Jehovah, the sanctuary on Mount Moriah, erected by Solomon as a dwelling-place for the God of Israel. (3) The new court, the outer or great court of the temple (1 Kings vii. 12). A quadrangle, this was probably called "new," because of having been restored or repaired by either Asa or Jehoshaphat. 2. *The assembly.* (1) The inhabitants of Jerusalem with their wives and children. (2) The representatives of Judah from all the cities of the land—whether accompanied with their wives and children uncertain. 3. *The suppliant.* Jehoshaphat acted as the mouthpiece for himself and his people. Standing forth in the centre of the congregation, he offered "without form or any premeditation (?) one of the most sensible, pious, correct, and, as to its composition, one of the most elegant prayers ever offered under the Old Testament dispensation" (Adam Clarke).

II. THE PRAYER. 1. *The Being addressed*—Jehovah. Adored as: (1) Personal and present. The God of Jehoshaphat and his people (vers. 7, 12). "He that cometh to God must believe that he is" (Heb. xi. 6). (2) Ancestral and faithful. The God of their fathers (ver. 6), who had covenanted with these fathers (Deut. v. 2), and would remain true to the engagements then undertaken (ch. vi. 14; 1 Kings viii. 57). (3) Celestial and mundane. The God of heaven as well as of earth, who dwelt among the armies of light and ruled among the kingdoms of the heathen (Dan. iv. 35). (4) Universal and local. Not the God of Israel and Judah alone, but the God to whom all empires and sovereigns owed allegiance (Ps. ciii. 19; cxxxv. 5, 6; 1 Chron. xxix. 11; Dan. iv. 17; Mal. i. 14; Rev. xi. 4). (5) Omnipresent and omnipotent. Possessed of resistless power and might which no one could withstand (ver. 6). 2. *The pleas offered.* (1) The covenant mercies of Jehovah in first gifting the land to his friend, their father Abraham, and to his seed for ever (Gen. xii. 1; xiii. 17); second, driving out the inhabitants of the land before them (Exod. xxxiii. 2; xxxiv. 11; Deut. xi. 23; Ps. xliv. 2); and third, in establishing them in possession of the vacated territory, so that for centuries they had dwelt in it (Lev. xxv. 18; Deut. xii. 10). (2) The expectation of Judah, that Jehovah would hear and keep them when in danger they called upon his Name (ver. 9). In this hope the temple had been built, and in the belief that this hope would be realized they now stood before Jehovah's presence (Ps. cxlvi. 5). (3) The ingratitude of the enemy, whom Israel on her way from Egypt had not been suffered to invade (Deut. ii. 4, 9, 19), and who now repaid her clemency by attempting to drive her from her land. Such ingratitude on the part of nations and individuals is by no means infrequent. The only things men find it easy to remember are insults and injuries; kindnesses remain with difficulty in the human memory (Gen. xl. 23; 1 Sam. xxiii. 5—12; Eccles. ix. 14—16; ch. xxiv. 22). (4) The helplessness of Judah. Jehoshaphat and his people were without strength to contend with so great a company. Neither knew they in what direction to turn or what to do. No better plea can be laid before Heaven than a confession of human weakness (Ps. vi. 2; xxii. 11), since God's strength is perfected in weakness (2 Cor. xii. 9). (5) The attitude in which they then stood. Their eyes were waiting upon Jehovah (Ps. xxv. 15; cxxi. 1, 2; cxxiii. 1, 2), trusting, desiring, expecting. They had placed their hope in and anticipated their help from him, as in a similar crisis Asa had done (ch. xiv. 11; Ps. cxxi. 1). 3. *The petitions urged.* That Jehovah would (1) judge and defeat their enemies; (2) hear and help them, the petitioners. The two requests were inseparable. Deliverance to Judah could only come through destruction of her adversaries. The Church of God may still conjoin the two petitions.

III. THE ANSWER. 1. *From whom it proceeded.* Jehovah (ver. 15), or the Spirit of Jehovah (ver. 14). No answers to prayer except from him. Human lips can reply for God only in so far as God puts his words into them (Isa. li. 16; Ezek. iii. 17; Jer. v. 14). 2. *Through whom communicated.* Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph; a man of (1) honourable pedigree, being the fifth in descent, not from the Hemanite Mattaniah, a contemporary of David (1 Chron. xxv. 4, 16), but from Nethaniah the Asaphite (1 Chron. xxv. 2, 12); the letter *n* having been accidentally changed into an *m* (Movers, Keil, Bertheau); (2) honourable rank, being a Levite, and therefore of priestly station; and (3) honourable calling, being, as a son of Asaph, a leader of psalmody in the temple worship, and now suddenly invested with the dignity of the prophetic office. God can find prophets anywhere when he wants them, not being bound to prophetical any more than to apostolical succession—Elisha at the plough (1 Kings xix. 19), Amos among the herdsmen (Amos i. 1). 3. *To whom it was addressed.* To all Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to Jehoshaphat, the persons in whose name and on whose behalf the prayer had been offered. 4. *Of what it consisted.* (1) A dissuasive against fear. "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude," similar to that given by Moses to the fleeing Israelites (Exod. xiv. 13), and for a similar reason, that the battle was Jehovah's more than theirs, and he would fight with and for them (Exod. xiv. 14; 1 Sam. xvii. 47). The same is true of the battle the Christian Church is summoned to maintain against the three powers of evil, known as the world, the flesh, and the devil (Matt. x. 28). (2) A command to advance. "Go ye down against them" (ver. 16), exactly as Moses was instructed to speak unto the children of Israel that they should go forward (Exod. xiv. 15). Little as God's people can or could do if left to themselves, they are not at liberty to play the coward in face of the foe (Deut. xxxi. 6; 2 Sam. x. 12; Mark xv. 43; Acts ix. 27; 2 Pet. i. 5), to subside into despair or take to their heels. Their duty is to stand fast, quit themselves like men, be strong, and persevere. (3) A direction where to find the enemy. "Behold, they come up by the cliff [or, 'ascent'] of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel" (ver. 16). This a part of the flat country extending from the Dead Sea to the neighbourhood of Tekoa, and called *El Husâsah*, from a wady on its northern side (Robinson, vol. ii. p. 243). The ascent or mountain-road, Hazziz, led towards it from Engedi. (4) An instruction what to do on meeting them. To set themselves in battle array—stand still and see the salvation of God (ver. 17). They would not require to fight. Jehovah would do the rest. Compare again the orders of Moses to the Israelites (Exod. xiv. 13). The instruction here given has its counterpart in that given by the gospel to sinners: "To him that worketh not, but believeth," etc. (Rom. iv. 5). (5) An encouragement to hope for victory. "The Lord would be with them" (ver. 17), and fight for them as he did for Israel at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 13) and at Gibeon (Josh. x. 14), as Moses promised he would do every time they faced their enemies (Deut. xx. 4), and as Nehemiah (iv. 20) afterwards believed he did. The same presence is enjoyed by the Church of God still (Matt. xxvii. 20).

IV. The acknowledgment. 1. *By the king.* "Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground" (ver. 18), in token of humility and reverence, as well as of adoration and submission (ch. xxix. 30; Gen. xviii. 2; xxiv. 26; Exod. iv. 31; xxxiv. 8; Josh. xxiii. 7). 2. *By the people.* "All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord," in a solemn act of worship. 3. *By the Levites.* Those belonging to the children of the Kohathites and the children of the Korahites "stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with an exceeding loud voice," adding notes of thanksgiving and rejoicing to those of adoration and self-humiliation which Jehovah's gracious answer inspired.

Learn: 1. The sorest need of man—a God to flee to in the hour of trouble and day of calamity. 2. The highest glory of God—that he can hear prayer and rescue the perishing. 3. The greatest peril of the Church's enemies—the fact that Jehovah fights against them. 4. The surest guarantee of victory for the Church of Jesus Christ—the fact that the battle is the Lord's. 5. The brightest hope for an anxious sinner—that he only needs to stand still and see the salvation of God.—W.

Vers. 20—30.—*A victory without a blow.* I. The march to Tekoa. (Vers. 20, 21.) 1. *The composition of the army.* (1) The king commanded in person (vers. 25, 27). Modern monarchs stay at home when their soldiers go to war, and even when they do not, seldom place themselves like Jehoshaphat in the forefront of their troops. Perhaps "discretion is the better part of valour;" but the arrangement commends itself as reasonable that kings and captains should share the perils of their subjects and followers. (2) The inhabitants of Jerusalem contributed their contingent to the force. Probably the flower of the nation's troops, these may have served as the king's body-guard. (3) The warriors of Judah completed the armament. The entire army mustered at and took its departure from Jerusalem. 2. *The time of its setting forth.* "Early in the morning," *i.e.* the next after Jahaziel's assurance. An indication of (1) faith, since without this they had hesitated and delayed, if not sat still and trembled (Ps. xxvii. 13); (2) zeal, discovering the eagerness with which they entered on the path of duty once it had been pointed out (Ps. cxix. 33); (3) courage, as being afraid of nothing with Jehovah as Leader and Commander (Ps. xxvii. 1). 3. *The address of its king.* Standing in the city gate as regiment after regiment filed into line and sallied forth, Jehoshaphat exhorted them (successively) to calm confidence in the ultimate success of the campaign upon which they were entering. (1) Two things he recommended—

absolute faith in Jehovah as their covenant God, and perfect trust in his prophets as the bearers of his message. (2) Two things he promised—the permanent establishment of their kingdom in spite of all attacks from without; its certain prosperity through being exempt from unbelief a sure but fatal source of weakness and division. 4. *The arrangements for its march.* Jehoshaphat made special preparations for encountering the foe. (1) A consultation was held with the people. Besides exhorting them as above recorded (Bertheau, Keil), he took them into counsel with himself, in the disposition next made. This conference occurred before the army left Jerusalem rather than on its reaching Tekoa. (2) Singers were appointed to march in front of the troops. Arrayed in sacred vestments, Levitical musicians were to praise the beauty of holiness, or to praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness, saying, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxvi.). Their singing and praising most likely began as they left the capital, was discontinued on the way to Tekoa, and was again resumed on reaching the vicinity of the enemy (ver. 22). 5. *The advance towards the foe.* A singular method of warfare it must have seemed—as ridiculous as the march of Joshua's warriors round the walls of Jericho and the music of their rams' horns must have appeared to the inhabitants of that old Canaanitish fortress (Josh. vi. 12—16).

II. THE SCENE FROM THE WATCH-TOWER. (Ver. 24.) This "watch-tower," a height in the wilderness of Tekoa which overlooked the desert of Jeruel, where the invading host lay encamped (ver. 16), was probably the conical hill *Jebel Fureidis*, or the Frank Mountain, from which a view can be obtained of the Dead Sea and the mountains of Moab ('Picturesque Palestine,' i. 137). From this elevation Jehoshaphat and his soldiers beheld the whole ground strewn with corpses, and not the vestige of a living foe to be seen. The enemy had been: 1. *Completely slaughtered.* The dead bodies were so numerous that "to all appearance none had escaped" (Keil); but the Chronicler manifestly intended to describe a case of not apparent, but real extermination. Not merely all whom the men of Judah beheld prostrate on the field were dead, but of all who had come up against Judah none had escaped. 2. *Self-destroyed.* They had fallen on and annihilated one another. That perhaps was not remarkable; thieves, robbers, and wicked men in general often fall out and destroy one another. The pity is they do not always do so before attacking other people. In this case two things were remarkable—the time when and the mode in which it happened. (1) It occurred when the army began to march and the Levites to sing and to praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness (ver. 22). Exactly, then, when God's people were manifesting forth their obedience, faith, zeal, and holiness, their enemies were destroying one another. The same thing would happen in the experience of the New Testament Church were she in a similar fashion to confront her adversaries, first arraying herself in the sacred garments of holiness, next trusting in God for the victories he had promised—in fact, praising him beforehand on account of them, and then going forth to behold them and gather up their fruits; her enemies, too, would destroy themselves. (2) It occurred through the direct instrumentality of God. Jehovah set against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir (ver. 22) "liers in wait," supposed to have been angels or heavenly powers sent by God, and called *insidiatores* because of the work they did against the enemy (Bertheau, Ewald), but more probably "Seirites, greedy of spoil, who from an ambush made an attack upon the Ammonites and Moabites" (Keil). These, becoming alarmed for their safety, not only repelled the "liers in wait," but turned with fury upon the Seirites marching with them, and absolutely exterminated them; after which, growing suspicious of one another, they flew at each other's throats and rested not until they had completely destroyed one another.

III. THE GATHERING OF THE SPOIL. (Ver. 25.) 1. *The articles.* (1) Riches—movable property, such as cattle, tents, etc., the usual wealth of nomads. (2) Dead bodies, *i.e.* corpses of men and carcases of animals; the former with clothing and jewellery, the latter with harness and accoutrements. The reading "garments" (Bertheau, Clarke), though not unsuitable (Judg. viii. 26), is probably incorrect. (3) Precious jewels, "vessels of desire," gold and silver ornaments like those Gideon's soldiers took from the Midianites (Judg. viii. 25). 2. *The quantity.* So abundant that three days were occupied in collecting it, and when collected it was found to be more than they could carry. The ear-rings taken by Gideon's warriors from the

Midianites weighed seventeen hundred shekels of gold (Judg. viii. 26); that obtained by Hannibal's soldiers at the battle of Cannæ was so great "ut tres modios aureorum annulorum Carthaginem mitteret, quos e manibus æquitum Romanorum, senatorum et militum detraxerat" ('Eutropii Historia Romana,' xli.).

IV. THE MUSTERING AT BERACHAH. (Ver. 26.) 1. *The place.* The valley, afterwards named from the incident of which it was the scene, must have adjoined the battle-field. A trace of it has been recovered in the *Wâdy Bereikut*, to the west of Tekoa, near the road from Hebron to Jerusalem (Robinson, vol. ii. p. 189). There is no ground for identifying it (Thenius) with the upper part of the valley of Kidron, afterwards called the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel. iii. 2, 12). 2. *The time.* On the fourth day after their arrival at Tekoa, the three intervening days having been employed in collecting the spoil. 3 *The business.* (1) To render thanks to Jehovah. National mercies should receive national acknowledgment, just as national sins require national confession. Full of gratitude for the marvellous deliverance they had experienced, Jehoshaphat and his people blessed Jehovah on the spot he had consecrated by so wondrous an interposition on their behalf. From this circumstance the valley afterwards came to be designated Emek-Berachah, or "the valley of blessing." (2) To prepare for returning to Jerusalem, which they forthwith did.

V. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM. (Vers. 27, 28.) 1. *Without delay.* After causing the wilderness to echo with anthems to him who had smitten great and famous kings (Ps. cxxxvi. 17, 18), they had nothing to detain them from their homes. 2. *Without loss.* Though they had gained a glorious victory, not one of their company was left upon the battle-field. "Every man of Judah and Jerusalem" that marched to Tekoa returned to the capital. 3. *Without disorder.* The same solemn and orderly procession that had characterized their going forth now distinguished their coming back. 4. *Without sorrow.* Few returns from the battle-field are without saddening recollections; theirs was marked by unmixed joy, to which they gave formal expression with psalteries and harps and trumpets in the house of the Lord.

Learn: 1. The best evidence of faith—prompt and cheerful obedience. 2. The true secret of national as of individual prosperity—belief in God and in God's Word. 3. The value of sacred song as a means of exciting religious feeling and sustaining religious fortitude. 4. The necessity of holiness in them who would command or lead the Lord's host. 5. The ease with which God could make the enemies of his people annihilate one another. 6. The rich spoil that belongs to faith. 7. The joyous home-coming of all God's spiritual warriors.—W.

Vers. 31—37.—*The biography of Jehoshaphat.* I. JEHOSHAPHAT'S PARENTAGE. 1. *His father.* Asa, a good king who enjoyed a long and honoured reign. Though good fathers have sometimes bad sons, as in the case of Jehoshaphat himself, yet there is a presumption in favour of a parent's piety being reproduced in the son. "Lord! I find the genealogy of my Saviour strangely checkered with four remarkable changes in four immediate generations. (1) Roboam begat Abia; *i.e.* a bad father begat a bad son. (2) Abia begat Asa; *i.e.* a bad father a good son. (3) Asa begat Josaphat; *i.e.* a good father a good son. (4) Josaphat begat Joram; *i.e.* a good father a bad son. I see, Lord, from hence that my father's piety cannot be entailed: that is bad news for me. But I see also that actual impiety is not always hereditary: that is good news for my son" (Thomas Fuller, 'Good Thoughts in Bad Times,' p. 43). 2. *His mother.* Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. Otherwise unknown, she was, nevertheless, the wife of a good man, the consort of a pious king—alas! also the mother of a wicked son. She was probably herself a woman of worth, and to her credit her name has been transmitted to posterity rather as her father's daughter and her husband's spouse than as her son's mother. In her case the hand of Providence has drawn a veil over her misfortune.

II. JEHOSHAPHAT'S REIGN. 1. *When it began.* When he was thirty-five years old. There was no room in this case for the royal preacher's woe (Eccles. x. 16). 2. *How long it continued.* Twenty-five years—a quarter of a century; during which time he and his people experienced much of the Divine favour and blessing. 3. *When it ended.* When he was sixty years of age; *i.e.* before he reached the allotted space of three score years and ten (Ps. xc. 10), and after a shorter life than was afterwards enjoyed by some of his less worthy successors, *e.g.* Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 3) and Manasseh (ch. xxxiii. 1)—a proof that the promise of long life as a reward for piety was not intended, even under the Old Testament, to be accepted universally and without exception.

III. JEHOSHAPHAT'S REALM. 1. Its *extent.* He reigned over Judah, the southern kingdom. 2. Its *condition.* Quiet. With the exception just mentioned it had suffered no invasion. It was disturbed by no internecine feud or civil strife. 3. Its *Protector.* Jehovah. "God gave him rest round about."

IV. JEHOSHAPHAT'S NEIGHBOURS. 1. Their *attitude.* They stood in awe of Jehoshaphat and his people. Compare the terror of the peoples through the midst of whom Jacob passed on his flight from Shechem to Hebron (Gen. xxxv. 5), and the fear which fell upon the city of Jerusalem on beholding the miracle of Pentecost (Acts ii. 43). 2. The *reason* of it. They heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel (ver. 29). So Miriam expected the report of Jehovah's victory over Pharaoh would paralyze the surrounding peoples through whom the ransomed host had to pass (Exod xv. 14—16).

V. JEHOSHAPHAT'S CHARACTER. 1. *Pious.* Like his father Asa, he walked in the way of the Lord. 2. *Persevering.* He departed not from doing right in the sight of Jehovah, *i.e.* in the matter of worship. 3. *Defective.* Not perfect in the sense of being faultless, he allowed the high places dedicated to Jehovah to remain, though other similar high places dedicated to idols were removed (ch. xvii. 6); and though he was better than his people, whose hearts were not prepared for a thorough-going reformation, he yet in a blameworthy spirit of complaisance yielded to their demands and permitted the unhallowed altars to stand.

VI. JEHOSHAPHAT'S ACTS. 1. *Those recorded by the Chronicler.* (1) The establishment of garrisons throughout the land (ch. xvii. 2). (2) The appointment of an itinerant ministry for the religious education of the people (ch. xvii. 7). (3) The fostering of commerce in the cities of Judah (ch. xvii. 13). (4) The creation of courts of justice (ch. xix. 5). (5) The reformation of religion (ch. xvii. 6; xix. 4). (6) The marriage of his son with Ahab's daughter (ch. xviii. 1). (7) The war at Ramoth-Gilead (ch. xviii. 28). 2. *Those written in the book of Jehu, Hanani's son.* (Ch. xix. 2.) These deeds of Judah's king are lost. How much of every life drops into oblivion, even though set down in a biography! Only that history which God writes lives for ever.

VII. JEHOSHAPHAT'S FAULTS. 1. *Plentiful.* Good as Jehoshaphat was, both as man and sovereign, he committed grievous blunders, and indeed fell into aggravated sins. The three worst were: (1) The marriage of his son Jehoram with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab—the mating of a lamb with the cub of a tigress. (2) The war with Benhadad which he entered on to please Ahab, without thinking whether he would thereby please God. (3) The joining of Ahaziah, Ahab's successor, in making a fleet to go to Tarshish, or a fleet of Tarshish ships in Ezion-geber. 2. *Punished.* None of these offences were overlooked by Jehovah. The alliance of Jehoram with Athaliah avenged itself in the depravation of Jehoram's character. The Syrian war, besides exposing him to imminent peril, brought upon him the Moabitish invasion. The fleet which he and Ahaziah made was wrecked in the Red Sea, and never went to Tarshish. So Eliezer, the son of Dodavah of Mareshah, predicted it would happen—because Jehoshaphat had a second time joined himself with the house of Omri. 3. *Pardoned.* Though chastised for his errors, Jehoshaphat was not abandoned to wrath. A child of the covenant and an heir of the promise, he was rebuked but not rejected, corrected but not condemned. So God deals with believers when they err (1 Cor. xi. 32).

VIII. JEHOSHAPHAT'S END. 1. *His death was peaceful.* "He slept with his fathers" (ch. xxi. 1). 2. *His burial was honourable.* He was entombed in the city of David, in the sepulchre of the kings of Judah. 3. *His throne was confirmed.* His son Jehoram reigned in his stead.

LEARN: 1. The fallibility of good men. 2. The infallibility of God's Word.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI.

The matter of this chapter may be divided into four parts. The death and burial of Jehoshaphat, and the number, names, and position of his sons (vers. 1—3). The accession and wicked course of Jehoram, the eldest son (vers. 4—11). The written warning and denunciation of Elijah, and the very practical warning of the Philistines, etc. (vers. 12—17). The disease, death, and burial of Jehoram (vers. 18—20).

Ver. 1.—The parallel for this verse is 1 Kings xxii. 50; and, with the exception of one word, it is an exact parallel. To understand the questions set in motion by the last clause of the verse, comparison must be made of 2 Kings i. 17; iii. 1; viii. 16. For anything that appears here, we should take for granted that Jehoram now first began to exercise any royal authority and enjoy any royal dignity. But the first of the just-quoted passages says Jehoram (of Israel) succeeded his wicked brother Ahaziah in the *second year* of Jehoram (of Judah), son of Jehoshaphat. In the second of the above-quoted passages, however, we are told that the same Jehoram (of Israel) succeeded to the throne in the *eighteenth* year of Jehoshaphat, which date tallies with our parallel of last chapter (1 Kings xxii. 41), to the effect that Jehoshaphat himself began to reign in Ahab's fourth year, and Ahaziah in Jehosaphat's seventeenth year. While, lastly, the third of the above-quoted references says that in the fifth year of Joram (of Israel), "Jehoshaphat being then King of Judah" (which, however, is itself an unfaithful rendering of what must be a corrupt text), his son Jehoram "began to reign." It has therefore been conjectured that the royal name was given Jehoram (of Judah) by his father in his father's sixteenth year, and that in his twenty-third year he further invested him with some royal power (our ver. 3 gives some plausibility to this conjecture), from which last date Jehoram's "eight years" (2 Kings viii. 17; ch. xxi. 5, 20) must be reckoned; this was not less than two years before the death of Jehoshaphat. Were it not for the countenance that our third verse (describing the cut-and-dried arrangements that the father made for his sons) gives to the tenableness of the above conjectures, we should prefer the conjecture that the passages commented upon are so much corrupt text.

Ver. 2.—Though in our version two Azariahs appear among the six sons of Jehoshaphat here given, the Hebrew text shows עֲזַרְיָה in the one place and עֲזַרְיָהוּ in the other. Nothing is known of the previous history of these six, now so cruelly murdered by their eldest brother. It will be observed that Jehoshaphat is styled King of *Israel*, probably merely generically. Into this way the writer of Chronicles would run, at any rate, more easily than the writer of Kings.

Ver. 3.—The father's foreseeing care issued very differently from what he had thought, waking now the greed and murderous intent of Jehoram. Jehoshaphat, nevertheless, was but following in the wake of the head of the separated kingdom of Judah, Rehoboam (ch. xi. 22, 23), wherein he is said to have "dealt wisely;" even the parallel (in the matter of one son Abijah, son of Maachah, the favourite wife, being appointed king) obtaining there in an aggravated form, as he was not the eldest son. This case, with those of Solomon and Jehoahaz (by the favour not of the parent but of the people, 2 Kings xxiii. 30), formed the exceptions to the usual observance of and honour done to the principle of primogeniture (Deut. xxi. 15—17).

Ver. 4.—Slew all his brethren . . . and also of the princes of Israel. It may be, as suggested by the genius of the last clause of our ver. 13, that Jehoram's wicked heart prompted him the rather *because* his own works were evil and his brothers' righteous. He may have thought their practical witness against him, and that of the "princes" who shared their fate, would be growingly inconvenient, and would work in them a necessary disloyalty (Judg. ix. 1—5). On the other showing, the "princes" now cut down may have shown partiality and affection to the six brothers, one or other of them.

Ver. 5.—He reigned eight years. This reign dates to begin with the twenty-second or twenty-third year of the reign of his father Jehoshaphat, according to note on ver. 1, above. The parallel of 2 Kings viii. 17—21 may be consulted for our vers. 5—11; our vers. 11, 13 expound in clearer detail the "evil" that Jehoram wrought than the narrative of Kings.

Ver. 6.—The daughter of Ahab to wife. That is. Athaliah, called (ch. xxii. 2; 2 Kings viii. 26) the daughter, that is, granddaughter, of *Omri*.

Ver 7.—The covenant . . . a light . . . his sons for ever (so 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13, 15, 16; xxiii. 5; 1 Kings viii. 20, 24, 25; 1 Chron. xxii. 10; Ps. cxxxii. 11, 12; Isa. lv. 3; Acts xiii. 34).

Ver. 8.—In his days the Edomites revolted . . . made themselves a king. The expression, "in his days," scarcely fails *intending* to accentuate the mournful change now as compared with the state of things depicted in our ch. xvii. 5—11.

Ver. 9.—**With his princes.** The parallel, 2 Kings viii. 21, reads, "to Zair." Of any such place nothing is known, and it has been proposed to supersede the word there by "Seir," which a certain amount of similarity of the Hebrew characters might countenance. Possibly by some mishap, not so readily explainable by misoccurrence of characters simply, our words, "with his princes," should stand in place of "to Zair." It must be noted that the two first clauses of the verse in the parallel become something inconsequential (which is not the case with the reading of our text), in that it says, "The king and chariots went forth *to a place*, and rose up by night," etc. The dislocation is, perhaps, not serious, but our text avoids it in reading, "The king, princes, and chariots went forth, and rose up by night and smote," etc.

Ver. 10.—**Libnah . . . because he had forsaken.** The parallel states the revolt of Libnah also, but does not make the closing remark of our verse.

Ver. 11.—**Caused . . . to commit fornication.** Perhaps the meaning is exclusively here the infidelity of idolatry, but at any rate it includes this.

Ver. 12.—**A writing.** The Hebrew is מִכְתָּב, noun, from verb כָּתַב. This noun does not occur very frequently, but is found in the following passages, viz.: Exod. xxxii. 16; xxxix. 30; Deut. x. 4; ch. xxxv. 4; xxxvi. 22; Ezra i. 1; Isa. xxxviii. 8. A note in Grove's interesting article, "Elijah" (Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' vol. i. p. 530), says that the word is almost identical with the Arabic word of the present day, while the ordinary Hebrew word for a "letter" is סֵפֶר, oftener rendered "book." **There came.** That this is the precise language used rather helps the persuasion that it was the well-known Prophet Elijah of Israel, who, not resident in Judah, and perhaps very near the end of his life, and in sight of his translation, was taught and directed divinely to send this message of rebuke and terror for Jehoram. **Elijah the prophet.** Some hold that it certainly was not the well-known prophet of the northern kingdom who is here intended. "Time, place, and circumstance," says Professor Dr. James G. Murphy, of Belfast ('Handbook to the Books of Chronicles,' p. 127), difference him "from the Tishbite." And he confidently considers him (with Cajetan) another Elijah (Ezra x. 21), or Eliah (1 Chron. viii. 27; Ezra x. 26; for the form rendered so), or Eliyahu, in which form the Hebrew name appears (אֵלִיָּה, or אֵלִיָּהוּ, being the forms of the name found), on the grounds that the Tishbite was translated in the time of Jehoram's father Jehoshaphat (2 Kings iii. 11); that his sphere was in the northern kingdom, and himself more of one who wrought mighty works and spoke *otherwise* than as a prophet; and that the designation "the prophet" need by no means denote him exclusively. He adds that a "writing" from a prophet is nothing strange, which may be easily conceded but poorly instanced by 1 Chron. xxviii. 19; better by Jer. xxxvi. 1, 2, 6. On the other hand, Grove (in article above quoted) and others find no invincible difficulty in accepting this Elijah for the famous prophet. His mention here is, of course, exceedingly interesting, as the only mention of him in Chronicles—a fact which very remarkably falls in with the abstinence as well as the fulness of the compiler of Chronicles. Josephus pronounces that the letter was sent during Elijah's life ('Ant.,' ix. 5. § 2), surmises to the contrary having been made. While Elijah's translation seems to have taken place before Jehoshaphat's death, from what we read of *Elisha* (2 Kings iii. 11), we may well account that Elisha had begun his ministry *before* his master's translation. Not only the other passages that confirm, but in especial the passage (2 Kings i. 17) which tells of Jehoram's being, before his father's death, on the throne of Judah at the time of Elijah's interview with Ahaziah (a passage that occurs immediately preceding the account of Elijah's last acts), might have led us to suppose that Elijah's letter was before Jehoshaphat's death, during the joint reign, but for the mention of the slaying of his sons. Bertheau, in our text in his 'Chronik,' points out the resemblance which the "writing" shows to the matter of the speeches of Elijah, while in certain respects of style, and the very insulated sort of introduction it has here, it greatly differs from the narrative in which it is now set. Although the calculation may seem rather a fine one, the circumstances described accurately point to the "writing" of Elijah reaching Jehoram before the chronologically misplaced translation of Elijah as given in 2 Kings ii. 1—11. This question may be instanced as one of the interesting moot points by no means compassed with insuperable difficulty, but challenging careful study and patient comparison of chronological and historical passages.

Ver. 13.—See note in previous verse on Jehoram's *slaying of his brethren*, and the conclusive proof this statement allows that Elijah's letter must have been subsequent to the death of Jehoshaphat. **The better than thyself** probably points to the fact that they had not fallen into idolatrous practices.

Ver. 14.—**A great plague**; Hebrew, מַגֵּפָה.

Out of the twenty-six occurrences of this word, it is rendered (Authorized Version) twenty-three times by the word "plague," twice by the word "slaughter" (2 Sam. xvii. 9; xviii. 7), and once "stroke" (Ezek. xxiv. 16). It is not the word (נֶגַע) which about sixty times (chiefly in Leviticus) describes the *physical* plague, but both of the words are applied to the plagues, *e.g.* of Pharaoh, and to the suffering that came of any severe smiting of the people. As no physical affliction in the shape of disease visited, so far as we know, the people, wives, and children of the king, and as his goods are reckoned in for the great *plague*, the general opinion is probably the correct one, that the invasions spoken of (vers. 16, 17) fulfilled the punishment now announced.

Ver. 15.—Therefore against Jehoram and Judas Iscariot and Herod was it decreed that their very bowels should bear witness.

Ver. 16.—The moreover of this verse is simply the conjunction "and;" it is not the גַּם of ver. 11, for instance. Our Authorized Version "moreover" obscures the purport of the verse. Better the simple "and," as in the Revised Version. **The Lord stirred up.** Reference may again be made to ch. xvii. 10—12. The things then gained are now being lost. **The Arabians . . . near the Ethiopians.** The *Ethiopians*, i.e. Cushites, fully fifteen centuries before the date of those original treatises from which the writers of Kings and Chronicles respectively borrowed their materials, or some of them, are recorded both genealogically and geographically in Gen. x. 6—8. They had their location very early in the south of Arabia, as also to the south of Egypt, speaking generally, with the Red Sea on the east, the Libyan desert on the west, and Abyssinia on the south, whilst Syene marked conspicuously a site on the line of the northern bounds between them and Egypt (Ezek. xxix. 9—11; Isa. xviii. 1, 2; xlv. 14; Zeph. iii. 10). They are almost invariably connected with Africa, from whence it is now that stress is laid upon those of them to whom the Arabians, on the *other* side of the Red Sea, were contiguous.

Ver. 17.—Brake into it; Hebrew, kal future of בָּקַע (compare the other four significant and expressive occurrences of this exact form, Judg. xv. 19; 2 Sam. xxiii. 16; 1 Chron. xi. 18; Isa. xlviii. 21). The elementary idea of the root is to *divide;* and it occurs in one conjugation or another fifty-one times, there being no more typical occurrence than that of Gen. vii. 11. **Carried away.** The Hebrew uses the word "carried captive" (וַיִּשְׁבּוּ); possibly the order of ver. 14 is inadvertently neglected, which puts the living beings before all the substance, or, *goods* (כָּל־הָרְכוּשׁ). **His sons also.** From ch. xxiv. 7 we note that the sons were not punished for their father's sins alone, but for their own. **Jehoahaz.** This person is called *Ahaziah* in ch. xxii. 1 (the syllables of the name being reversed) and *Azariah* in ch. xxii. 6, which cannot be explained, but must be supposed an error. The Jehoiachin of ch. xxxvi. 9 is written *Jeconiah*, or *Jechoniah*, in 1 Chron. iii. 16, 17; *Coniah* in Jer. xxii. 24, etc.; and *Jechoniah* in ch. xxiv. 1, etc. The two parts of the word combined in either order make the same meaning. On account of the express mention of the camp in ch. xxii. 1, some think that the slaughter and the plunder were all such as might have been wrought in the *royal* quarters *there;* others that we are to infer the taking by assault of Jerusalem itself and what was therein.

Ver. 18.—An incurable disease; *i.e.* it was so severe that it was in this case incurable.

Ver. 19.—After the end of two years. That "two years'" space began at the end of nearly two years after his father's death. Two years' warning and space for repentance subsequent Jehoram had turned to no account, and even affliction and suffering brought him no amendment. **No burning** (see our note on ch. xvi. 14).

Ver. 20.—Departed without being desired; literally, *without desire.* The closing commentary, so quietly written, becomes the more pathetically mournful. The "desire" spoken of is the *desiderium* of Horace, of nearly nine centuries later ('Odes,' i. 24). But there was now no "desiderium . . . tam cari capitis," for want of room for this latter description. **They buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings** (see again our note on ch. xvi. 14; and comp. ch. xxiv. 25; xxviii. 27).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*A reign of unmitigated shame.* To the career of Jehoshaphat of almost exemplary excellence, that of Jehoram, his son, forms a contrast most humiliating. Obviously it is not the least painful feature of this latter that it so inevitably forces into our memory the parental fault, which, if it were not the cause and very foundation of an eldest son's abandoned character and course of conduct, could not fail to have given opportunity for it, and could not fail to incur the responsibility before all the world of having lent the occasion. This chapter teaches us significantly—

I. THE RARE VANITY OF HUMAN ENDEAVOUR TO PROVIDE BY ANY CONTRIVANCES AGAINST THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS OWN FAULTS AND SINS. No disposition in his will, no disposition of the gifts of his property on the part of Jehoshaphat, sufficed to avert these in this instance (vers. 3, 4).

II. THE IMMENSE ADDITION OF PAIN AND PUNISHMENT FOR SIN THAT ARE INVOLVED HEREIN IN EVEN SUCH POOR MEASURE OF FORESIGHT AS BELONGS TO HUMAN NATURE. This is an indication of the great mercy that lies in the limited measure of the powers of human nature. To be hunted and goaded by the forces of memory from behind, and at the same time terrified by the only too just apparitions of anticipation, and the pictures of what awaits us in front, even in this life,—*how* dreadfully might they at times add to the misery of life! How often might they induce remorse, and the despair that comes of remorse!

III. THE SPECIAL ROYAL HUMILIATION AND PUNISHMENT WHICH CONSIST IN VICTORY, POSSIBLY VICTORY ON VICTORY, WITHOUT CONQUEST. (Vers. 8, 10, 16, 17.) It is the Sisyphus of kings and rulers and nations, and Jehoram was the Sisyphus of this time and history. But it involves also misery and a scourge for the nation cursed with such rulers.

IV. THE ACCUMULATION OF RETRIBUTION THAT COVERED AND CROWDED THE END FOR JEHORAM. Forewarned by the great Prophet Elijah, perhaps the very last, certainly among the very last, of the acts of his ministry, a horror of a bodily disease; a plague for his people, his children, his wives, and his goods; the slaughter of all his sons save one—the one necessary to carrying on the line of Judah; an unhonoured death, and the forfeiting of a place in the ancestral sepulchres of the kings;—*these* were "the portion of his cup," and the filling up of its bitterness—the retribution of an iniquitous and godless career, apparently unrelieved by a single virtue or single good deed! It was impossible, indeed, that *his* father could learn from notice and experience of the son; but "all these things were written for our admonition" for all succeeding generations, and tell their gravest lessons, and offer their most fearful warnings for many another father.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*A life spent in undoing.* For the quarter of a century Jehoshaphat spent all his individual power and devoted all the weight of his royal office to the work of establishing piety, justice, and (in consequence) real prosperity throughout his kingdom. And right well he succeeded. When he died he left Judah much purer, stronger, and richer than he found it. Then came his firstborn son in succession to him. And what came with him? What else but a baneful and lamentable undoing of all that he himself had done—all, at least, that his son had it in his power to overturn?

I. THE COURSE OF ONE EVIL LIFE. 1. Jehoram's reign began in *selfish cruelty.* To secure his own position, he murdered his six brethren; to avert a contingent evil to himself, he wrought the last and worst evil to his own mother's sons (ver. 4). 2. It went on to *personal apostasy.* (Ver. 6.) He turned away from the God of his fathers, from the worship of the God to whom he might and, indeed, *must* have known that his throne was due, to serve Baal; and in so doing he forsook the way of wisdom and of purity for paths of error and iniquity. 3. It led down to the *abuse of royal power.* For he not only made Jerusalem to be partaker of his sin, but he tyrannically compelled Judah to do the same (ver. 11). He employed his royal authority (and probably his standing army) to constrain his people to depart from the way of holiness, from spiritual and moral integrity. 4. It issued in *national disaster.* In the loss of the Divine favour; in the consequent defeat of his troops and loss of a dependency; in the revolt of an important city (vers. 8—11). 5. It closed in an early and miserable *death.*

II. ITS MOST STRIKING CHARACTERISTIC. It went far to undo all that a long and devoted life, all that a useful and brilliant reign, had done. It pulled down a large part of that which had been so carefully, so laboriously, so wisely constructed. How easily, and in how short a time, can a bad man undo what his predecessor, with infinite effort, has accomplished! The striking and the holding of a lucifer match may bring the stateliest structure to a heap of ruin. The deflection from the way of rectitude on the part of one prominent life, the wandering from God of one strong human spirit, may have the effect of bringing to nought the labour of more than one lifetime. How true the proverb, "One sinner destroyeth much good"! There are amongst us the names of men who have reached that poor and most pitiful notoriety of not having attempted to do any good, but of having dragged down with themselves their family, their Church, their community, to a dark depth of shame and ruin.

III. THE EXPLANATION OF IT. Two factors were concerned in it and account for it. 1. The unwisdom of his father. Jehoshaphat made one of his serious mistakes—and he made more than one—when he married his son to Ahab's daughter (ch. xviii. 1; ver. 6). He could not conceivably have taken a more dangerous step; it was the very last thing a faithful servant of Jehovah should have done. What was likely to happen when the daughter of Jezebel was presiding at the court of Jerusalem? Thus Jehoram's father, with a fatuity at which we can but wonder, introduced a blighting influence into the home and so into the heart of his son. 2. His own evil choice. These two things—unhealthy forces acting upon us from without and our own false resolves—determine our character, our course, our destiny. Let us be thankful for all holy influences; let us be most solicitous to bring all and only good ones to bear on those for whom we care. Let those who are young set before them the honourable ambition of confirming the good work of their fathers; let them beware lest a bad and selfish commencement lead down to a miserable and disgraceful end.—C.

Vers. 19 (latter part), 20.—*The trouble that is worse than sorrow.* "His people made no burning for him;" he "departed without being desired." It is wise for us all not only to enjoy the present appreciation of our friends, which may be an expression of their desire to stand well with us, but also to consider what will be—

I. THE AFTER-ESTIMATE THAT WILL BE FORMED OF US. Jehoram probably comforted himself while he lived with the approval of many of his courtiers. There are always found men mean enough to compliment the man in power, however they may despise him. But probably he did not foresee that his body would hardly be cold before he would receive marks of general dishonour, and that not one week would elapse before it would be signified to all the land that he was held unworthy to sleep with his fathers. It is surely the mark of a very narrow and earthly mind not to care what men will think of us when we are departed because it will *make no difference to us then. That* is not quite certain; but if it were, it surely behoves us, as upright spiritual intelligences, to care much for our reputation when we have left these scenes. Shall we not desire to enjoy "the memory of the just"? Shall it not be a matter of moment to us that, when we are no longer here, those who remember us will think and speak kindly of us, as of men that played their part bravely and faithfully, as of men that loved and helped their kind? If this be so, since this is so, let us reflect that after a while our character will stand in its true colours; that all our pretences will disappear; that men will know us to have been just what we are; that after death disguises fall away, and the man himself stands forth in his virtue or in his guilt, in his manliness or in his meanness, in his large-mindedness or in his selfishness and smallness. We must *be* right if we would be so regarded when death takes off the veil from our character. But we see here another thing worthy of our consideration.

II. THE TROUBLE THAT IS WORSE THAN SORROW. 1. It is sad enough when a good man dies and is regretted. When some great gap is left; when from the home, or from the Church, or from the state there is taken one who had loved and been beloved, who had served well and been highly honoured;—when such a one is borne to his burial, amid the tears and lamentations of many hearts, we feel that a great affliction has befallen us, and we must bow in subjection to the Father of spirits. 2. But it is sadder far when a bad man dies unlamented; when, as with Jehoram, no one cares to pay him funeral honours; when the Chronicler has to say about him that he "departed without being desired." For of what does it speak? (1) Usually it speaks of the Divine condemnation. The indignation of a people, especially of a nation that has received instruction from God himself, is commonly a reflection of the judgment of Heaven; it signifies that "the departed" is a man whose life the Holy One has condemned. (2) Always it speaks of the deliberate reprobation of man. For when a man dies, there is a disposition to be lenient in judgment, to overlook offences and to magnify service and virtue; when therefore, the dead are distinctly dishonoured, when there is no one to pronounce a eulogium or even to feel a lament, it is clear that their contemporaries have decidedly and seriously condemned them. (3) It speaks of a deplorable failure. Excepting in those comparatively rare cases of the very best and greatest men, who have been before their age in understanding and in action, and have therefore been misunderstood, when men die dishonoured and without regret it may be taken that their lives have been unworthy; that they have been marked by evil; that they have been fruitful of folly and of wrong. And what can be sadder than that? That God should give us our powers and our lives in order that we may spend them for his honour, to promote the real well-being of our fellow-men, and to cultivate in ourselves wisdom and worth that will fit us for higher spheres; and that we should degrade our priceless opportunity by scattering seeds of error, by diffusing unholy principles, by doing our utmost to injure the spirits and to lower the lives of men, thus starting influences for evil which will spread far and wide, and will go down from generation to generation;—there is nothing we can conceive of which is more deplorable than this. (4) It is a painful and pitiable thing in itself. To depart unregretted by any one! To go for ever and to be missed and mourned by none! To leave no hearts that will be saddened by our absence, that will wish to see us and speak to us again! To be borne away, not like the fair and noble tree, whose fruit has been a treasure, whose form has been a perpetual joy all the year round, whose shadow has been a kindly shelter to old and young, with a sincere if not affectionate regret; but like an unsightly and cumbersome log, that has been an offence to the eye and an obstruction in the way, with a sense of relief and satisfaction;—who of us would like to be so regarded when we die? Who of us would not infinitely rather be bathed in a pure and holy sorrow as we mourn some departed friend that has lived in love and died in honour, than leave in the grave one for whom no tear is shed, whose departure no soul regrets? Let us be such men and live such lives that if our survivors and successors do not "make a great burning for us," as was done for Jehoram's grandfather (ch. xvi. 14), they will lose us with a genuine regret, and mourn for us with a sorrow that will hallow their own hearts, while it testifies to the worth that has found a home beneath other skies.—C.

Vers. 2—11.—*The character of Jehoram.* I. A DEGENERATE SON. 1. *The advantages Jehoram possessed.* (1) A good father, Jehoshaphat, whose example should have led him, whose instructions should have taught him (Prov. i. 8), whose prayers should have won him to walk in wisdom's ways. But they did not. Piety is not hereditary. Example often fails to impress, instruction to convince, prayer to save, the children of godly parents. Numerous instances in Scripture (1 Sam. ii. 12; viii. 3; xv. 1, etc.) and in ordinary life. (2) A good estate. As Jehoshaphat's firstborn, he succeeded—whether during his father's lifetime (Keil) or at his father's death (Bähr) uncertain—to an exalted throne and a peaceful realm, became ruler of a promising people and a growing empire. He had much to make him contented with his lot and thankful for his mercies, to lead him to think of God and devote himself to the practice of religion, as well as to consecrate his talents to advancing the moral and material interests of his subjects. Nevertheless, he neglected both his own and his people's salvation. (3) A good God, who had kept him alive for thirty-two years, when many better men than he had been cut off in youth (ver. 5); who had allowed him time to mature in wisdom before calling him to assume the burdensome responsibilities of the throne; who had promoted him to his father's crown, which might easily have been given to another (ver. 3); who bore with him in his wickedness for his servant David's sake (ver. 7); who punished him by suffering the Edomites to revolt (ver. 8), stirring up the Philistines and Arabians against him (ver. 15), and afflicting him with a mortal malady (ver. 18), of which he was forewarned by a letter from Elijah (ver. 12). Yet for all this Jehoram walked not in the ways of Jehoshaphat his father, or in the ways of Asa his grandfather, but in the ways of Ahab, the King of Israel (vers. 6, 12, 13). 2. *The disadvantages under which he laboured.* (1) A bad heart. That Jehoram, though belonging to Judah and a son of Jehoshaphat, was not a child of grace, his whole subsequent career attested. "All are not Israel, that are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children" (Rom. ix. 6, 7); "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: . . . but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). That

Jehoram was not born good was no excuse, since Jehovah's grace was ready to assist him in overcoming his natural corruption (Deut. xxx. 6; 1 Kings viii. 58; Ps. cx. 3). (2) A bad wife. Athaliah, though a king's daughter (ver. 6), was a wicked woman. Exalted in station, beautiful in person, gifted with high mental endowments, she may have been; nevertheless, she was inwardly, essentially, and radically of depraved instincts. Like her mother Jezebel, she was superstitious, profligate, bloodthirsty, imperious, and resolute. She belonged to the type of woman of which Herodias and perhaps Drusilla and Bernice were New Testament examples, and to which should be assigned the Shakespearean creations of Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra. In the hands of such women even strong men find it difficult to resist the fatal influence of their superior natures, while feeble creatures like Ahab and Jehoram are dragged like captives at their chariot-wheels. The most dreadful calamity that can befall a weakling is to wed such a spouse. A woman leagued with the devil will drag her husband to perdition with a certainty and celerity that hardly even the grace of God can prevent. In such plight was Jehoram. (3) A bad environment. Though not everything, a man's surroundings are something. They help to make or mar him. If good, they will at least hinder his deterioration; if bad, they will hasten it. Perhaps nothing could have been worse for Jehoram than to have Ahab's daughter for a wife; it was no amelioration of his hard fate to have Ahab for a father-in-law, Jezebel for a mother-in-law, Ahaziah and Jehoram for brothers-in-law, and the house of Omri generally as relatives and friends. It was hardly surprising that in after-years Jehoram, the King of Judah, had no moral resemblance to Jehoshaphat's son.

II. AN UNNATURAL BROTHER. 1. *The names of Jehoram's brothers.* Six in number; they had excellent names. (1) Azariah, "whom Jehovah helps." "Happy is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his Help" (Ps. cxlvi. 5). This name may have been given by Jehoshaphat to his second and his fifth sons—distinguished slightly by the spelling, Azarjah and Azarjahu—to emphasize that all hope for stability in his house and prosperity in his kingdom depended on and proceeded from the assistance of Heaven. (2) Jehiel, "God liveth." Perhaps this truth was impressed upon Jehoshaphat's heart by the birth of his third son (Ps. cxxvii. 3), as it was upon David's, by his continued preservation from the hand of Saul (2 Sam. xxii. 47; Ps. xviii. 46). (3) Zechariah, "whom Jehovah remembers." Probably given by Jehoshaphat to his son after Zechariah, the father of Jahaziel, who predicted the overthrow of the Moabites (ch. xx. 14). Or, Jehoshaphat may have counted his fourth son a happy proof that Jehovah had not forgotten him, but was still mindful of his covenant. (4) Azariah (see above). (5) Michael, "who is like unto God?" A great thought for a young man to carry about with him on life's journey, and one that might stir him to noble deeds as well as lead him into pleasant ways. This thought was familiar to Moses (Exod. viii. 10), to David (Ps. lxxxvi. 8), to Ethan the Ezrahite (Ps. lxxxix. 6), and to Isaiah (xl. 18). (6) Shephatiah, "whom Jehovah defends." The name of one of David's sons (2 Sam. iii. 4), and probably for this reason bestowed upon Jehoshaphat's. 2. *The ranks of Jehoram's brothers.* Princes of the blood royal, they were well provided for and well placed by their father, whose crown fell to Jehoram as heir-apparent. Great gifts of silver, gold, and other precious things were bestowed upon them, while they were appointed, as Rehoboam's sons had been (ch. xi. 23), commandants of fortresses in the different fenced cities of Judah. Thus they had no need to be discontented with their lot, and most likely were not. 3. *The characters of Jehoram's brethren.* They were better than he (ver. 13). Presumably in every way—physically, mentally, morally, religiously. This last, perhaps, specially intended. Jehoshaphat's piety had exercised upon them more influence than upon him; they disapproved of the idolatrous behaviour and wicked policy generally of him and his wife. 4. *The murder of Jehoram's brethren.* Whatever the motive—cupidity or a desire to appropriate their wealth, fear or a dread of being insecure upon his throne while they lived, or hatred of their persons because they shunned his evil ways—it was a hideous deed of blood, which has seldom been paralleled amongst Oriental kings. "Upon the death of Selimus II. (1582), Amurah III., succeeding to the Turkish empire, caused his five brothers—Mustapha, Solymon, Abdalla, Osman, and Sinagar—without pity or commiseration, to be strangled in his presence and burned with his dead father" (Whitecross, 'Anecdotes on the Old Testament,' p. 190). Along with his brethren, he put to death a number of the princes of Israel, and for probably a similar reason, because they disapproved of his conduct and sympathized with his brethren.

III. A WORTHLESS KING. 1. *An apostate in religion.* To be sure, he never had religion in reality. Yet, as Judah's sovereign and Jehoshaphat's son, he ought to have upheld the true worship of Jehovah. But instead he became a devotee of Baal, a favourer of the false gods his half-heathen wife patronized, building high places for them in the mountains of Judah—thus practically reversing the work of his devout father (ch. xvii. 6) and grandfather (ch. xiv. 2), and causing the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, *i.e.* to practise idolatry (Isa. xxiii. 17; Ezek. xvi. 29; Rev. xix. 2); yea, compelling Judah by violence to go astray (Deut. xiii. 6, 11). 2. *A weakling in government.* Under him the Edomites, who had in Jehoshaphat's reign been tributary to Judah (2 Kings iii. 9), becoming restive, achieved their independence. According to Josephus ('Ant.,' ix. 5. 1), they first slew their king, who had yielded to Jehoshaphat, and afterwards elected one who raised the standard of revolt. A feeble attempt to reduce them to subjection proved abortive. At Zair, on the way to Edom—not to be identified with Zoar (Ewald), which belonged to Moab, but perhaps with the modern ruin *Zûweirah*, on the south-west of the Dead Sea (Conder)—he, with all his princes and chariots, encountered the rebels; but whether he defeated them (Jamieson), or only cut his way through them when they had encompassed him (Keil), is obscure, though even on the former supposition his success was not permanent or decisive. Either then or soon afterwards the Edomites completely renounced the yoke of Judah. About the same period also, Libnah—a city in the district of Eleutheropolis (Eusebius), though as yet unknown—succeeded in establishing its freedom. 3. *A pigmy in manhood.* Apart from the plague which struck him in his last days, while yet in middle life (ver. 15) he was obviously a poor and contemptible creature. When he died nobody lamented him—at least, nobody among his subjects. "He departed without being desired" (ver. 20). Men were glad to see the last of him. They would not burn a burning for him, as they did for his good father and pious grandfather when they died. His rotten carcase they buried in the city of David; they would not desecrate with it the sepulchres of the kings.

Learn: 1. The necessity of personal religion—no man may trade upon his father's piety. 2. The duty of parents to provide for their children—exemplified by Jehoshaphat's donations to his sons. 3. The bitterness of sin's fruit when fully developed: "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" in its worst forms—murder, fratricide, etc. 4. The value of a good wife—inferred from the calamity of a bad one. 5. The mercy of God to great sinners, even when they do not repent—illustrated by God's tolerance of Jehoram. 6. The essential weakness of sin—as shown by the Edomite revolt against Judah. 7. The pestilential influence of sin in high places: "One sinner destroyeth much good."—W.

Vers. 12—15.—*The letter of Elijah.* I. THE AUTHOR OF THE WRITING. Various suggestions. 1. *Elisha*, who entered on the duties of his calling before the death of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings iii. 11), and who accordingly would be the most likely party from whom should proceed such a communication as Jehoram received. In this case the name of Elijah must have been substituted in the text for that of Elisha (Kennicott, Jamieson). 2. *A later historian*, "who describes the relation of Elijah to Joram in few words, and according to his conception of it as a whole" (Bertheau); but "this judgment rests on dogmatic grounds, and flows from a principle which refuses to recognize any supernatural prediction in the prophetic utterances" (Keil). 3. *Elijah*, the author named in the text. Besides being in the text, the word occurs in all existing Hebrew manuscripts and in all the Oriental versions.

II. THE DATE OF THE WRITING. Again different explanations. 1. *After Elijah's translation.* The notions that either Elijah sent the letter from heaven by an angel (Grotius), or spoke it from the clouds (Menken), may be discarded as conjectures wanting in support from any intelligible analogies (Keil). 2. *Before Elijah's translation.* Here two views emerge. (1) After Jehoram had ascended the throne (Keil, Rawlinson). This assumes that Elijah was alive at the commencement of Jehoram's reign (2 Kings i. 17), and may have learnt of the assassination of Jehoshaphat's sons—the knowledge of which crime may have moved him to send its perpetrator the divinely given announcement of his death this letter contains. The fact that Elisha accompanied Jehoshaphat to the Moabitish war (2 Kings iii. 11) does not prove that Elijah had then been translated, since Elijah was alive in the second year of the conjoint reign of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat his father (2 Kings i. 17; iii. 1). (2) Before Jehoram had ascended the throne (Buddæus, Clarke). Nothing impossible in the suggestion that Elijah had the wickedness of Jehoram revealed to him before it occurred, as previously he had been informed of the elevation of Jehu to the throne of Israel, and of the accession of Hazael to that of Syria, before these events happened (1 Kings xix. 16, 17). Either explanation is admissible, though the latter is probably more correct.

III. THE CONTENTS OF THE WRITING. 1. *A twofold accusation.* (1) A charge of aggravated idolatry. Not only had Jehoram himself forsaken the way of Jehoshaphat and of Asa, *i.e.* the worship of Jehovah, and turned aside into the way of the kings of Israel, *i.e.* worship of Baal and other idols, but he had corrupted the whole house of Judah, and caused them to commit spiritual whoredom, like the house of Ahab. (2) An indictment of infamous murder. He had slain all his brethren, the children of his father's house, who were better than himself. 2. *A twofold retribution.* (1) A great stroke upon his people, upon his house (his wives and children), upon his property (his goods or substance). As prosperity was a usual concomitant of piety, so adversity was wont, under Jehovah's government of Israel, to dog the heels of impiety. (2) A greater stroke upon himself, in the shape of a slow, but sure, loathsome and mortal disease which should seize upon his bowels. That it should continue for two years before terminating fatally (Bertheau) can hardly be made out from the expression, "day by day," or "days upon days." The prophet could speak with confidence, since diseases are God's messengers who come and go at his command (Exod. xv. 26; Deut. xxviii. 60; Ps. ciii. 3).

IV. THE FULFILMENT OF THE WRITING. 1. *The invasion of Jehoram's kingdom.* (Ver. 16.) (1) The prime mover was Jehovah, as Elijah's letter predicted. "The Lord stirred up the spirit of the Philistines," as formerly, on two several occasions, he had stirred up an adversary to Solomon (1 Kings xi. 14, 23), and afterwards stirred up Pul (Tiglath-Pileser) King of Assyria, against Pekah King of Israel (2 Kings xv. 29; 1 Chron. v. 26). God is said to do what, for the accomplishment of his own wise and sovereign purposes, he permits to be done, and hence is represented as working all things according to the counsel of his will (Job ix. 12; Ps. lxvi. 7; cxv. 3; Dan. iv. 35; Eph. i. 11). (2) The acting instruments were the Philistines, an ancient enemy of Israel (Judg. x. 7; 1 Sam. iv. 1) on the west; and the Arabians near the Ethiopians, *i.e.* the middle Arabians, exactly south of Palestine (Schürer). This juxtaposition of the Philistines and Arabians occurs in two more places in this book (ch. xvii. 11; xxvi. 7). (3) The extent is indicated by the details given. The savage hordes broke into Judah. That they captured the capital seems a natural inference from the plunder they carried off (Bertheau), though, had Jerusalem been sacked, "the treasures of the palace as well as of the temple would have been mentioned" (Keil). In any case, they carried off "all the substance found in the king's house," which may signify all the property of the palace (Bertheau), or all the king's property found in the country, in the cities, villages, and castles of Judah (Keil). Along with this, they made prisoners of the king's wives and sons, except Jehoahaz, or Ahaziah. What they did with the former is not recorded; the latter they slew (ch. xxii. 1). 2. *The affliction of Jehoram's body.* Whatever the malady, a violent dysentery, or some disease of the intestines, it was (1) sudden—"Jehovah struck him," pointing to a mysterious and inexplicable infliction difficult to trace to any immediate physical cause, and therefore ordinarily ascribed to a supernatural origin (ch. xxvi. 20; Acts xii. 23); (2) painful—"the diseases" were "sore;" (3) protracted—his "sickness" continued "two years;" (4) loathsome—"his bowels fell out" towards the end of that period; (5) mortal—he succumbed beneath his ailment, and "died."

Learn: 1. God's knowledge of the histories, characters, and actions of men (Prov. xv. 3). 2. God's ability to foresee and reveal to men the nature and tendency of their or others' acts (Gen. xviii. 17; xli. 28; 1 Sam. ix. 15). 3. God's determination to be avenged of them that do wickedly without respect of persons (Ps. xxxiv. 16; xxxvii. 38). 4. God's resources for executing his purposes of judgment or mercy.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

This chapter comprises the accession, brief reign, and death of Ahaziah (vers. 1—9); and the following murders and usurpation of Athaliah during six years (vers. 10—12). The parallel of the former section is to be found in 2 Kings viii. 24—29; ix. 14—16, 21—28; and of the latter, xi. 1—3.

Ver. 1.—This verse does not so much purport to say how the inhabitants of Jerusalem proceeded to appoint Ahaziah, in default of any previous appointment on the part of his father, but merely that whereas they appointed him, the youngest son, it was because they had no choice, the elder brothers having been slain (ch. xxi. 17), though the deceased Jehoram possibly might not have known up to the time of his death, for certain, of their several deaths. This, if we may judge from the particular language here used, had been brought about at the hands of the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp, now first particularized. The parallel (2 Kings viii. 25), wanting both of these items, states that this reign began in the twelfth year of Joram of Israel.

Ver. 2.—**Forty and two**; read, *twenty and two*, and see parallel, 2 Kings viii. 26; and note on our ch. xxi. 5. **Daughter of Omri**; *i.e.* granddaughter of Omri, as Omri was the father of Ahab.

Ver. 3.—The mother and the house of Ahab had become a proverb and a by-word for their evil. In this and the following two verses stress is laid on the evil counsel and the sources of it that prejudiced Ahaziah to his ruin. Although the parallel wants these direct statements, perhaps it scarcely says less, when it says (ver. 27), "For he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab."

Ver. 5.—**He . . . went with Jehoram the son of Ahab.** So the evil example of even the good lives after them. See Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 29; ch. xviii. 3) followed by his son Jehoram first (2 Kings iii. 9), and now by his grandson Ahaziah. The words of this verse and the next are almost identical with the parallel (2 Kings viii. 28, 29). **Ramoth-Gilead.** It will be remembered that Ahab failed when he solicited and obtained the help of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 3—36; ch. xviii. 3—34) in his enterprise against Ramoth-Gilead. The present attempt, however, seems to have had a different issue (2 Kings ix. 14, 15). **The Syrians**; Hebrew, הָרַמִּים. The initial radical here should be א, from neglect of observing which the Septuagint has translated "archers" (τοξόται).

Ver. 6.—Both places (this and the parallel) tell *first* that Ahaziah went with Joram against Hazael; then that Joram, being smitten, returned for healing to Jezreel; next that Ahaziah, out of compassion in some sort, went down to see Joram in Jezreel; and lastly, it is here signalized that in that very deed of his, Providence brought it about that Jehu lighted upon the track of him (vers. 7—9), and he met his end. This feature of the history the writer of Chronicles wishes to exhibit, as usual. **Ramah**; *i.q.* Ramoth-Gilead. **Jezreel.** This was a town in the Plain of Jezreel (Esdraelon), belonging to the tribe of Issachar. **For Azariah** read *Ahaziah*; compare אֲחַזְיָהוּ (*Ahaziah*) and יְהוֹאָחָז (*Jehoahaz*), the meaning of both being "held" or "upheld of the Lord."

Ver. 7.—**He went out with Jehoram against Jehu.** The "against" is the simple preposition אֶל, and need intend nothing more than "to meet" Jehu; not to meet him hostilely. What the manner of the meeting was, however, we know from 2 Kings ix. 21, 22, 27, 28. The history of this and following two verses is here given very briefly; much must be filled in to give its full explanation, as in 2 Kings ix. 11—29. **Whom the Lord had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab**; *i.e.* had raised him to the throne, possessed of the characteristic qualities which he had for *this* purpose (2 Kings ix. 1—7; 1 Kings xix. 16). **Jehu the son of Nimshi.** Strictly, "the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi" (2 Kings ix. 2).

Ver. 8.—**Executing judgment upon the house of Ahab.** The description of all this is sufficiently graphically scattered along the verses of 2 Kings ix. 24—xi. 20. **And found the princes of Judah** (see especially 2 Kings x. 7, 11; xi. 13—20). **And the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah.** This both explains and is explained by 2 Kings x. 12—14. **That ministered to Ahaziah.** Even this enigmatical little clause receives its probable explanation from the last clause of ver. 13 in last quotation foregoing.

Ver. 9.—**And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him . . . brought him . . . buried him.** This verse, which at the first sight seems at variance with 2 Kings ix. 27, 28, is perhaps a simply surprising instance of undesigned corroboration of history by the treatment of different historians. The verse, *e.g.*, corrects the italics of 2 Kings ix. 27; expunging them throws their proper force into the words, "at the going up to Gur," showing that Jehu reckoned on that steep hill to enable his pursuing warriors to overtake Ahaziah; makes a sufficiently possible harmony, to say the least, in respect of the remaining incidents narrated of his life—that he made for the time a successful flight to Megiddo, afterwards sought to hide in deeper retirement in Samaria, was thence brought to Jehu at Megiddo, there eventually slain before his eyes, and by his own servants, who must be supposed to have had some attachment to him, but probably with the sanction of Jehu himself, conveyed "in a chariot to Jerusalem" for sepulture "in the sepulchre of his fathers in the city of David" (2 Kings ix. 28). The fact that he received decent burial being due to the God-fearing character of his grandfather, and that this should find its record on the page of the book that will last while the world lasts, that very page already two thousand five hundred years old, is a most touching consideration. Megiddo was on the Esdraelon or Jezreel plain, that stretched between the hills of Galilee and those of Mount Ephraim or Samaria. **Had no power to keep still the kingdom.** The undoubted meaning of this clause is that there was no one of the house of Ahaziah who could succeed him. The Hebrew text does *not* say, "no one *left*," etc. But the allusion can scarcely be to anything but the fact that transpires in our ver. 11 (where only Joash is mentioned as a son, and with him a *nurse*), viz. that his only surviving son was an infant. The king's sons (presumably sons of Ahaziah and grandsons of her own) were among the "seed royal," whom the wicked Athaliah had "destroyed." Gesenius says that the words that wrap in them the slight ambiguity, עָצַר כֹּחַ, are a phrase peculiar to the later Hebrew, and he instances nine examples, all of which come from Daniel or Chronicles, the virtue of the phrase amounting to the *potis esse* of the Latin. Translate, *And there was no one of the house of Ahaziah able for the kingdom*, the exacter conditions of the case not being recorded.

Ver. 10.—**But when Athaliah.** For parallel to the end of the chapter, see 2 Kings xi. 1—3. The words, **of the house of Judah,** are here carefully supplied, wanting in parallel.

Ver. 11.—**After of the king,** the parallel conveniently certifies the name, *Joram*, and adds, "sister of Ahaziah" (very possibly half-sister, though), and afterwards particularizes the hiding, as from Athaliah, as in the latter part of this verse. We are here told, what is not mentioned in the parallel, that Jehosheba was "wife of Jehoiada the priest," probably the high priest. Nor is this negatived by the fact that the name is not found (1 Chron. vi.) in the line from Aaron to Jozadak; for this is only the line of *Jozadak's* ancestors, all of whom were not high priests. Joash is to be heard of again (2 Kings xi. 21; ch. xxiv. 1).

Ver. 12.—**With them hid in the house of God six years.** During this time evidently Athaliah reigned. There were in the "house of God" chambers sacred to the use of either priests or temple officials (1 Kings vi. 5—10).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*A medley of the memoranda of evil-doing, its consequences, and its end.* The one surviving son of Jehoram, his youngest son, Ahaziah, is put on an unsteady, unsafe throne. Jehoram had caused all his own brethren to be slain, and now it had come to pass that all *his* "eldest sons had been slain by the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp" As Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and granddaughter of Omri, the evil wife of Jehoram, had not failed to make an evil husband of Jehoram, so, the evil mother, she does not fail to make an evil son of Ahaziah. She "was his counsellor to do wickedly." And therein her whole house, "the house of Ahab," were "after the death of his father, counsellors to his destruction." Ahaziah repeated the error of his grandfather Jehoshaphat, in associating himself with the King of Israel, going up with him to fight against Hazael King of Syria, at Ramoth-Gilead. It leads to further complications. The King of Israel is wounded and returns to Jezreel, and because "he was sick," Ahaziah must go thither also to "see" him. He unconsciously is courting "his destruction," "of God" (ver. 7); for once there he must support the king of his rival line against one whom "God had anointed" to the very work of "cutting off the house of Ahab." He is not only setting himself "to help the ungodly, and to love them that hate the Lord" (ch. xix. 2), but he is setting himself in battle *with* one against whom the Lord has anointed his own servant ("Jehu the son of Nimshi"), that he may destroy him and his! That is, he has put himself in the position of actively and directly fighting against God. And now, by doing thus, he not only involves "the princes of Judah, and the sons of his own brethren" (because of the company in which they were found), in indiscriminate slaughter, but himself, the King of Judah, hidden—*hidden* in *Samaria*, searched for, caught, taken. He with his mother has been run to earth in a double sense, hounded to his miserable earthly end, his bones being honoured with decent burial only out of reverence for his good grandfather Jehoshaphat. The humiliating epitaph, however, on his grave was to this effect, "The house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom!" Once more the enraged mother of the son whom *she* more than any one else had driven into his sin and his grave, plots the slaughter of the entire royal seed of David; but in vain. A faithful promise, a sure covenant, an unalterable purpose, prevents the thing! The sister of the king just buried was married to Jehoiada the priest, and she was the appointed preserver of the royal line, in the providence of God. She saves *one*, an infant, her nephew, and with her husband hides him for six years where alone so many others have taken refuge, and been safely hidden till the stormy wind and tempest have been overpast—"in the house of God." The usurping and iniquitous Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, wife of Jehoram once, and once mother of Ahaziah, an orphan, a widow, and without a son, unloving and unloved, neither fearing God nor regarding man, reigns awhile, but does not rule! God rules the people, rides the storm, keeps the sleep, the infancy, the childhood, of his anointed; inspires his true priest, Jehoiada, with wisdom, patience, determination, and religious courage. The royal line of Judah is not cut off in its sixth king, and, when to the most of human knowledge it seemed so, that six years' interval may well have served as a needed pause in the life of the kingdom and of its chief men. "The Word of the Lord" was no doubt "precious in those days," but it was not lost, and there was a faithful priest. The silences of nations and oft of our own individual life, the silences of Scripture and of the inscrutable God himself, all have meaning, all bear the mark of design and long-suffering providence, and if improved instead of neglected, sinned against, and defied, may be rich with future blessings.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*A pitiable prince; or, an unfortunate child of fortune.* The thorough pitiableness of one born to a high estate is the lesson of the text; but we must wait to learn—

I. THAT MEN SUFFER AS THEY SIN. It appears that Ahaziah was the only son left to the house of Jehoram; all the eldest had been slain by the invaders (ver. 1). Thus we find that the man who with shameful selfishness murdered his own brothers, had to suffer the loss, by violence, of his own sons. It was a fitting penalty—fitting that he who used the sword remorselessly should suffer from the sword; fitting that the man whose darkest crime was committed "under his own roof" should bear his penalty in his own kindred. We do not, of course, invariably find such "poetic justice" dealt in the providence of God; but we do find that men not only suffer because they sin, but they suffer *as* they sin. If they sin as husbands or fathers, they suffer as such; if they sin as sons, they suffer through their children; if they sin in the flesh, they suffer in the flesh; or if they sin in the spirit, they suffer in the spirit. There is a close, a plain, a righteous correspondence between guilt and penalty.

II. THAT PARENTAGE GOES A VERY LONG WAY TO ACCOUNT FOR HUMAN CHARACTER AND FOR THE CAREERS OF MEN. Ahaziah was the grandson on his mother's side, of Ahab and of Jezebel. What may he not have inherited from them? He was the son of Athaliah. And, apart from the consideration of heredity, what evil did he not drink in from the counsels of that wicked woman? She was "his counsellor to do wickedly" (ver. 3). 1. We may well bless God for all the good we and others have derived from godly parents, especially from a holy mother, from the "counsels" received at "the mother's knee." The blessing thus conferred upon the world is quite inestimable. 2. Those who are parents may well realize the sacred burden of responsibility which rests upon them; for it rests with them, very largely indeed, to determine what their sons and daughters shall be—whether a blessing or a bane to the world. 3. We do well to try and elevate those who are, or will be, the mothers of the future. There is no worthier Christian enterprise than the Zenana Mission, in which the aim is to reach and to raise the women who will be "the counsellors" of the men and women of the next generation. 4. Evil counsel may extenuate, but it will not excuse, our individual folly and wrong-doing. Not even a mother may lead us into paths of sin.

III. THAT FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES WILL NOT GUARANTEE ANY MAN'S WELL-BEING. 1. Who so fortunate in Judah as Ahaziah? Heir to the throne, and succeeding at an early age (see 2 Kings viii. 26 with ver. 17 of that chapter); married while he was young; with little children soon about him; with every prospect of power, wealth, domestic affection, royal estate, for many years. 2. And who more pitiable than this young prince? Educated and trained in the belief of error, in the practice of folly, with a mother whose whole influence was against moral worth, seeking and forming a dangerous alliance, cut off after a very brief reign (ver. 2), leaving a reputation of ill odour behind him. It is certain that no man can count on a future of prosperity and joy simply because the *circumstantial outlook* is favourable. The child of fortune, like Ahaziah, proves to be one of the most unfortunate of men. Whom all his young contemporaries were disposed to envy, we who look back unite to pity with a most genuine and deep compassion. Who, let us ask, is the man to be envied, or rather to be congratulated? Surely it is he who is born of Christian parents, who has about him in childhood and in youth "counsellors" who will know what is true, and do what is really kind and wise; it is he whom his human father trains in the way of righteousness, and whom his heavenly Father disciplines, according to his Divine wisdom, building him up in purity, in integrity, in strength, in love.—C.

Ver. 4.—*The counsel that destroys, and that which saves.* "His counsellors . . . to his destruction." The counsel we receive has much to do with the character we form and the life we live; much, therefore, with the destiny we are weaving.

I. THE URGENT NEED FOR COUNSEL IN A CRITICAL PERIOD OF OUR LIFE. In our earliest years the river of our life flows between high and narrow banks. We are well fenced in, and must move according to our surroundings. But later on the banks are lower, the restrictions are weaker, and we may overflow, may cut a new channel for ourselves. At first we are *under commandment* from hour to hour; we do that which is prescribed for us; we shun that which is interdicted. Then comes a time when we disengage ourselves from this position; it has become bondage; we demand to enter upon the rights of maturity, to form our own judgment, to act according to our own choice. It is at this point, when the father's authority is no longer paramount, that we need to act *under counsel.* We urgently need the help of those who will advise, though they do not assume to direct us. We want the guidance of those who will say to us, not, *You shall*, but, *You should.*. We require the advantage of the experience of men who have gone through the ways that now lie before us; of men whose wisdom will equip us for the new *duties* that have to be discharged, for the new *burdens* that have to be borne, for the new *dangers* and difficulties that have to be faced and fought, for the new *temptations* that have to be met and mastered. But there are two kinds of counsel, and everything depends on which we shall adopt.

II. THE COUNSEL THAT DESTROYS; viz. the counsel that kills all that is best in our nature, and brings us down to spiritual if not, indeed, to material ruin. 1. The counsel of a *degrading selfishness*, which speaks on this wise: "Take care of number one;" "Every man for himself," etc.; that would impress the opening mind of young manhood with the miserable falsehood that, so long as we can secure what we crave for ourselves, it is of little consequence what becomes of our neighbours or of our fellow-men. 2. The counsel of *shameful indulgence*, which speaks in this strain: "Youth comes but once in a lifetime;" "A short life and a merry one;" counsel that would recommend the young to consume all that is pure and sound in their nature in the fires of unholy passion, to drown all that is worthiest, all sense of what is becoming, and all self-respect, in the turgid waters of unrestrained or ill-restrained indulgence. 3. The counsel of *financial exaggeration*, which says, "Get money by all means, honestly if possible, but get money;" this is counsel which would "sacrifice life for the sake of the means of living," which would lead to the loss of that which is most sacred and precious for the sake of that which, at best, can only supply the outward conditions of well-being. It makes mere pecuniary possession the goal of human life—a very common but an utter and pitiable mistake. 4. The counsel of a *shallow materialism*; that which lays great stress on temporal success and on human favour, and makes little or nothing of spiritual worth and the favour of God. Such counsels as these are truly destructive; they kill faith, love, purity, hope, spirituality—everything, indeed, which makes our manhood, which constitutes our true heritage. Under such counsellors we may gain the world, but we lose our soul; they are "counsellors to our destruction."

III. THE COUNSEL WHICH SAVES. There is One of whom, many centuries before he came, it was said, "His name shall be called Counsellor;" of whom, when he was with us, it was said, "Whence hath this Man this wisdom?" who came to be to us "the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). If we will learn of him, we shall know what is the truth indeed respecting human life, worldly wealth, the honour which comes from man and that which is of God, what constitutes eternal life below, and what it is that leads on to the heavenly life beyond the grave (see Matt. vi. 19, 20, 33; x. 37—39; Luke iv. 4; xii. 15; John v. 44; xiv. 23; xvii. 24).—C.

Vers. 5—12.—*Our friends and their fate, etc.* These verses offer us a cluster of truths which we may gather.

I. THAT OUR FATE IS COMMONLY BOUND UP WITH THAT OF OUR FRIENDS. Ahaziah "went with Jehoram the son of Ahab" (ver. 5); and, allying himself with him in war, he visited him as a friend when he was at his home at Jezreel. But this friendship with God's enemies led him to his destruction; his coming to Jehoram was "of God" (ver. 7); it was the way taken by Divine Providence to bring upon him the penalty of his guilt. For he perished with his friend on the same day and at the same hand (vers. 8, 9). When we are determining upon our alliances and our friendships, it is well not only to consider the station, the income, the reputation in society, of those who invite us to their confidence, but also to inquire concerning *their probable whitherward.* In what direction are they moving? Toward what goal are their faces turned? What will their end be? Are they on an upward or on a downward course? For nothing is more likely than that we shall share their fate, that we shall become what they are becoming.

II. THAT THE INFLUENCE OF A GOOD MAN GOES FAR BEYOND HIS OWN GENERATION. "They buried him, Because (they said) he is the son of Jehoshaphat," etc. (ver. 9). He was Jehoshaphat's grandson; but though they had to go back two generations, the memory and the moral impression of the good king had not faded—at any rate, had not been effaced. "The *memory* of the just" abides; it is fragrant after many years have gone; and *the influence* of the holy lasts when the memory has disappeared. Knowledge in the memory, peace in the mind, soundness in the soul, beauty and usefulness in the life,—these are the fruits of the good man's life, though they are not traced to his hand and not referred to his working; they are influences which spread and widen as the years go on.

III. THAT IF WE PLACE OURSELVES UNDER THE DOMINION OF EVIL, WE DO NOT KNOW TO WHAT DEPTH WE MAY DESCEND. We have here a woman, who was brought up in a civilized court, and who had the opportunity of acquainting herself with the Law of the Lord, causing all her own grandsons to be murdered, in order that she might have the helm of the state in her own hands! To what a bottomless depth of moral degradation can a woman sink, when she gives herself up to the power of evil! And we do not, any of us, know the lengths of wrong-doing, the depths of iniquity, to which we may go, if we once yield to that strong temptation—impurity, avarice, indulgence in strong drink, the intoxication of applause, or whatever it may be—which is assailing and even threatening us. Shun the first step in an evil course, for the slope becomes steeper as we go further, and it leads down to a deep and dark gulf of shame and ruin.

IV. THAT WOMANLY KINDNESS HAS A LARGE CONTRIBUTION TO BRING TO THE CAUSE AND KINGDOM OF GOD. It was a very great service, fruitful of large results, which Jehoshabeath now rendered (ver. 11). It was a very valuable service that womanly kindness and fidelity rendered to our Lord when he lived and when he died for us. The Apostle Paul had to thank womanly kindness for succour in the course of his career. Pity, with the hand of help it stretches forth, is a handmaid of piety, a valued servant in the king's household.

V. THAT IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD WE MAY FIND A HIDING-PLACE FOR OURSELVES. (Ver. 12.) His aunt hid the infant Joash in the house of God (ver. 12). Many times, in many lands, has the house of God been a *sanctuary*, a place where men have taken refuge and have hidden themselves from the wrath of the pursuer. But there is a better way in which God's house may be to us a sanctuary. We may go there to *hide ourselves* in him whose house it is. We may go there with our troubled or our sin-burdened heart, and we may hide in him who is the God of all grace and consolation, in him who is abundant in mercy and truth (see Ps. xxvii. 4, 5). When we cherish a living faith in God our Saviour and our Friend, we "hide ourselves under the shadow of his wings" (Ps. xvii. 8).—C.

Vers. 1—12.—*A chapter of tragedies.* I. THE SLAUGHTER OF JEHORAM'S SONS. (Ver. 1.) An illustration of three things. 1. *The perils attending high station.* Jehoram's sons were among the captives taken by the Philistines and Arabians (ch. xxi. 17). Had they been common soldiers, their lives might have been spared; being princes of the blood, they were put to death. A man's social elevation attracts towards him the arrows of hate, envy, malice, and other secret foes; an obscure position tends to protect him. Therefore let none murmur that the Arbiter of destinies has not made them kings or great ones; neither let any rejoice that their places on earth are not low. 2. *The mischances accompanying war.* It was probably their duty to take the field against the combined hordes of the Philistines and Arabians; nevertheless, they who go to war even for defence, and much more for aggression, must not be surprised if they are killed. In the case of Jehoram's sons, the camp of Judah had been surprised by a reconnoitring party who had come with the Arabians (Keil), or by "a band of wild men who served in the army of the Arabians, possibly against the will of the leaders" (Bertheau); and Jehoram's sons, having first been carried off as prisoners, were afterwards put to death. In ancient times, when prisoners became troublesome or proved dangerous, this was the customary way in which they were disposed of. 3. *The retributions wrought by Providence.* Even if Jehoram's sons were not as wicked as himself, it was a signal illustration of the *lex talionis*, a conspicuous demonstration of the truth that with what measure one metes it shall be measured to him again (Matt. vii. 2). Jehoram had assassinated all his brothers on ascending the throne; before he descended from it, Jehovah suffered him to see all his sons (except the youngest) cut off by invading marauders. "Are not my ways equal? saith the Lord" (Ezek. xviii. 29).

II. THE EXTERMINATION OF AHAB'S HOUSE. (Ver. 7.) Incidentally referred to by the Chronicler, it is more fully detailed in 2 Kings ix. and x., and may here be briefly narrated. 1. *The thing determined by God.* (1) When? As far back as the time of Elijah, in the days of Ahab himself (1 Kings xix. 16, 17). Divine foreordination interferes not with the freedom of human action. If the destruction of Ahab's house was carried out in fulfilment of a previously formed Divine decree, it was, nevertheless, effected by a political revolution. (2) Why? On account of the incurable apostasy, outrageous irreligion, and flagrant blood-guiltiness of Ahab and his successors on the throne of Israel. Besides being an idolater of the most debasing type, Ahab had been a murderer of extreme ferocity, and his successors had walked in his ways. There was, therefore, no remedy remaining but one—complete extirpation. Under the Divine government, redemption or destruction are the two alternatives that stand before all evil-doers (Isa. i. 19, 20). Souls that cannot be recovered must be cut off (Ps. xxxvii. 9). When the predilnvian world had sunk below the line of possible restoration, it was submerged beneath the waters of a flood (Gen. vi. 7). When Sodom and Gomorrah had become too filthy to be renovated, they were burnt up from off the face of the earth (Gen. xviii. 21; xix. 24, 25; 2 Pet. ii. 6; Jude 7). 2. *The instrument selected by God.* (1) His name. Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. This first revealed to Elijah at Horeb (1 Kings xix. 16). In the Assyrian inscriptions Jehu is twice mentioned, and each time as "Jehu the son of Omri," the foreign scribe being unacquainted with his history as recorded in Scripture, and regarding him as a prince of the dynasty of Omri. An obelisk of black marble, five feet in height, found at Nimroud, and now in the British Museum, represents the tribute brought to Shalmaneser II. by vassal princes, among whom appear "Yahua, son of Khumri," giving "silver, gold, bowls of gold, vessels of gold, goblets of gold, pitchers of gold, lead, sceptres for the king's hand, and staves" ('Records,' etc., v. 41); while a fragment from the annals of Shalmaneser III. contains a similar statement, that in the eighteenth year of his reign, after conquering Hazael of Damascus, he received the tribute of the Tyrian, the Sidonian, and of "Yahua the son of Khumri" (Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 210). (2) His station. Originally an officer, probably the ablest general, and therefore field-marshal of Jehoram's army (2 Kings ix. 5). God chooses his instruments from all ranks and occupations. Those who have served him most efficiently in the Christian Church have not unfrequently been drawn from the army. The profession of a soldier need not hinder one from being a servant of God. (3) His character. Energetic, active, decisive, ambitious, unscrupulous, bloodthirsty, cruel, and fanatical, "the worst type of a son of Jacob, the 'supplanter,' as he is called, without the noble and princely qualities of Israel, the most unlovely and the most coldly commended of all the heroes of his country" (Stanley, 'Jewish Church,' p. 33[illegible]). God's selection of a man to be his instrument does not imply a commendation of his character—witness Pharaoh, Saul, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod. (4) His designation. To be king over Israel. This first communicated at Horeb to Elijah, who received at the same time a commission to see Jehu's anointing to the throne carried out—a commission afterwards executed by Elisha (2 Kings viii. 29; ix. 6). (5) His usurpation. In this he was assisted by his brother-officers (2 Kings ix. 13). Though designated and anointed by Elisha to the throne of Israel, more than likely, as in the case of Jeroboam (1 Kings xi. 31), the project of dethroning Jehoram had already floated before his mind. (6) His commission. To execute Divine vengeance on the house of Ahab by extirpating it, root and branch, from the land. Rough work, it needed a rough instrument. 3. *The work carried through by God.* By means of his instrument. The Chronicler recognizes (vers. 7, 8) that Jehu was God's sword. How far Jehu himself was under the dominion of this thought may be hazardous to affirm. But, in any case, he lost no time in discharging the bloody business entrusted to his hand. With a swiftness and relentless severity that suggested leonine ferocity as much as religious zeal, he posted to Jezreel and began the work of butchery. First he drove an arrow through the heart of Jehoram (2 Kings ix. 24); next procured the death of Jezebel by commanding two of her servants, his minions, to throw her from the palace window (2 Kings ix. 33); and finally caused the seventy sons of Ahab in Samaria to be beheaded (2 Kings x. 7).

III. THE MURDER OF THE PRINCES OF JUDAH. (Ver. 8.) 1. *Who these were.* (1) Sons of the brethren of Ahaziah. Not the brethren of Ahaziah (2 Kings x. 13), since these had all been slain by the Arabian marauders (ch. xxi. 17), but the children of these brothers, and therefore Ahaziah's nephews. That they were forty-two in number cannot be pronounced impossible, since it is not known how many elder brothers Ahaziah had. (2) Princes of Judah, who were doubtless remoter branches of the royal house, and held important offices in the court. Possibly these should be included in the number forty-two mentioned above. 2. *When they were killed.* (1) When Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab (ver. 8). Though not responsible for being connected with the house of Ahab, that they were so proved the cause of their destruction. Their sad fate was an illustration of two truths—that the innocent often suffer with and for the guilty (Job ix. 23), and that no one can predict how far the disastrous consequences of one false step may reach. Had Jehoram not married Athaliah, these princes had not fallen victims to Jehu's sword. (2) When Jehu was on the way from Jezreel, where he had perpetrated three murders, to Samaria, where he had committed one massacre by deputy, and whither he was going to add another (2 Kings x. 25). Having fallen in with the princes of Judah, Jehu ordered his attendants to take them alive. Their resistance, it is supposed, led to their immediate slaughter. One massacre more was nothing to Jehu. Besides, the destruction of forty-two princes, mostly boys, was a trifle to that he was contemplating—the wholesale sacrifice of Baal's worshippers in the house of Baal. (3) When Ahaziah's nephews were on the way to Jezreel to pay a visit to the court at Jezreel, "to salute the children of the queen and the children of the king" (2 Kings x. 13). One never knows where he may be overtaken by death; hence the necessity of being always ready. 3. *Where they were killed.* At the pit or cistern of the shearing-house, or "house of gathering" (2 Kings x. 13); at "the shepherds' house of meeting" (Chaldee Version, Thenius, Bähr)—a house which served the shepherds of the region round about for assembling; or at the house where the shepherds tied up their sheep for shearing

(Keil). "In a well close by, as at Cawnpore, they were all slaughtered" (Stanley). 4. *By whom they were killed.* Jehu, whose motive may have been either (1) because he regarded their death as embraced within the scope of his commission, or (2) because he feared the exaction by some of them of blood-vengeance, or (3) because he wished to render impossible any future attempt at the subversion of his authority.

IV. The assassination of Ahaziah. (Ver. 9.) 1. *After a brief reign.* Ahaziah succeeded to his father's throne in his forty-second year, or in his twenty-second (2 Kings viii. 26)—a discrepancy removed by supposing the forty-two to indicate the age of the kingdom of his mother's family (Lightfoot), but best explained by conceding that an error has crept into the text (Keil, Bertheau, Bähr). After enjoying regal power for one year, he fell a victim to the sword of Jehu—a startling reminder of the uncertainty of life and the vanity of human greatness. 2. *By the hand of Providence.* "The destruction of Ahaziah was of God" (ver. 7); not merely as all things are under the Divine control, but in the special sense that the incidents which led to Ahaziah's destruction were of God's permitting, if not ordering. (1) God allowed Jehoram to go to war, as his father had done, with the Syrian king, now not Benhadad II., but Hazael the usurper (ver. 6), who is mentioned along with Jehu in the Assyrian inscriptions, and with whom Shalmaneser II., in the eighteenth year of his reign, fought at Damascus, capturing his camp with 1221 chariots and 470 war-carriages (Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 210; 'Records,' etc., v. 34; Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 123). (2) Ahaziah of Judah he permitted to go to Ramoth-Gilead with his uncle. (3) In the war Jehovah ordered it that Jehoram should be wounded and return to Jezreel to be healed, and that Ahaziah should afterwards also leave Ramoth and go to the Israelitish capital to inquire for his mother's brother. (4) Hence it came to pass that he was found in Jehoram's company when Jehu came to Jezreel on his murderous errand (2 Kings ix. 21). (5) Had this train of circumstances not preceded, Ahaziah's death might not have followed, at least at the time when and the place where it did. 3. *As a just retribution for his wickedness.* For Ahaziah a tremendous misfortune, for which he was in no way responsible, that he had Jehoram and Athaliah for his parents. If any man might be said to have "a double dose of original sin," or inherited corruption, he had. If he may be pronounced happy who has the piety of generations at his back and within his veins, propelling him forward in the ways of virtue and religion, on the other hand he should be deemed an object of pity who is not only held back from the paths of godliness, but urged into the broad roads of sin and vice by secret forces of heredity that have been gathering momentum through a long succession of wicked ancestors. Disadvantageously placed as Ahaziah was, he was under no compulsion to yield to the evil influences by which he was surrounded. That he did not resist them, but abandoned himself to them without let or hindrance, was his sin. (1) He "walked in the ways of the house of Ahab," and "did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab." He copied their idolatries and their immoralities. (2) He took as his example the house of Ahab, and especially his mother, Athaliah, whom the Chronicler, with reference to her wicked propensities, fitly designates "the daughter of Omri." 4. *In spite of strenuous efforts to escape.* The accounts given of these efforts to escape are considerably divergent. According to the Chronicler, when Ahaziah saw Jehoram sink down in his chariot after being struck with Jehu's arrow, he fled by the way of the garden house, but was followed by Jehu, and, like his uncle, wounded with an arrow at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam, whence he fled to Megiddo, and died there (2 Kings ix. 27). According to 2 Kings, Ahaziah had hid himself in Samaria, and, being found there, was slain by Jehu's servants. The accounts are pronounced irreconcilable, that of Kings being the older and more authentic (Bähr, Bertheau); but the explanations ordinarily proffered (Lightfoot, Keil) are deserving of consideration—that Ahaziah, on first escaping, fled to Samaria, and was afterwards found there by Jehu's servants, who brought him to Jehu, at whose command he was shot while in his chariot at Gur, beside Ibleam, and that, once more escaping, though this time mortally wounded, he reached Megiddo, and perished there. On the sites here mentioned, consult the Exposition.

V. The destruction of the seed royal of the house of Judah. (Ver. 10.) 1. *The victims of this massacre.* All the seed royal, *i.e.* all the direct descendants of the kingly house, all who might in any measure or degree aspire to the throne. As

Ahaziah's elder brothers had been captured and slain by the Arabs (ch. xxi. 17), and as their sons, Ahaziah's nephews, had been (in part at least) put to death by Jehu (ch. xxii. 8), it is possible that the actual victims were not numerous. 2. *The perpetrator of this massacre.* Athaliah, the queen-mother, who thereby proved herself a true daughter of Jezebel. Instead of grieving at the tidings of her son's death, and taking measures to shield his young children, her grandsons, from the sword of Jehu, she herself compassed their destruction. Thereby she showed herself a most unnatural mother, an inhuman monster—a woman, like Lady Macbeth, "from the crown to the toe, top-full of direst cruelty" ('Macbeth,' act i. sc. 5). 3. *The motive of this massacre.* Probably mingled fear and ambition. Apprehensive of her own safety when she saw that Jehu had slain her son, she may have judged that the speediest and surest way to establish her security was to cut off every possible rival from her side, and seize the throne of Judah for herself. It was the usual mode of procedure amongst Oriental sovereigns, on ascending the throne, to put to death all possible claimants of the crown. It is not difficult to see who was Jehoram's teacher (ch. xxi. 4). 4. *The extent of this massacre.* All the seed royal, with one exception, Joash, Ahaziah's son, who was rescued by his aunt, Jehoshabeath, his father's daughter but not his mother's—she was obviously the daughter of one of Jehoram's secondary wives—and the wife of Jehoiada the priest (see next homily).

LESSONS. 1. The vicissitudes of human life (ver. 1). 2. The vanity of earthly glory (ver. 2). 3. The danger of evil counsel (ver. 3). 4. The self-destructive character of sin (ver. 4). 5. The madness of walking with wicked men (ver. 5). 6. The propriety of sympathizing with the ungodly in their afflictions (ver. 6). 7. The tiger-like ferocity of some monsters in sin (vers. 7—10). 8. The mystery of Providence in suffering such monsters to live.—W.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The rescue of Joash.* I. THE DANGER FROM WHICH HE WAS DELIVERED. 1. *An early death.* He was an infant at the breast, since he had a wet-nurse: "not above a year old" (Josephus). More than one-half of the human race die in infancy. Scripture examples of the deaths of children: the firstborn of Pharaoh (Exod. xii. 29, 30); the child of David (2 Sam. xii. 14—23), of Jeroboam (1 Kings xiv. 13), of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 17), of the Shunammite (2 Kings iv. 19, 20). Many exposed to the danger of dying in infancy who nevertheless escape, like Moses (Exod. ii. 3), the child of the harlot (1 Kings iii. 25), Jesus (Matt. ii. 8), the centurion's son (John iv. 49). 2. *A violent death.* He was in danger of being cut off by the sword. To die a natural death in infancy is sad enough; to be cut off by a supernatural stroke like the Egyptian children, or the Bethlehem innocents, or by an accidental stroke like the Shunammite's boy, much more by a violent stroke like Samaria's children (Hos. x. 14), excites the imagination as a hard fate indeed. 3. *An unnatural death.* He was in danger of being killed by his own grandmother. Only one fate could have been worse—to have been slain by his own mother, like the son of the woman in Samaria (2 Kings vi. 29); or by his own father, like the King of Moab's eldest son (2 Kings iii. 27).

II. THE PERSON BY WHOM HE WAS DELIVERED. 1. *A kinswoman.* Jehoshabeath, or Jehosheba, "Jehovah is the oath," was the aunt of Joash, the sister of his father (see preceding homily). 2. *A good woman.* A plausible inference from the fact that she was married to Jehoiada the high priest. "Even princesses did not then scorn the bed of those that served at God's altar" (Hall). Most likely she and her husband disapproved of the state religion and state policy of the day, inspired and controlled as these were by Athaliah. 3. *A brave woman.* Scarcely without peril to herself could she have carried out her humane design of rescuing her infant nephew. 4. *A clever woman.* Without immense tact she could never have evaded the vigilant eyes of Athaliah. Of the substitution of some other child in Joash's room (Hall) Scripture is silent.

III. THE MODE IN WHICH HE WAS DELIVERED. 1. *By secret concealment in the palace.* Along with his nurse he was hid in a bedchamber, or chamber for the beds; neither the dormitory of the priests and Levites in the temple-courts (Vatablus), nor the sleeping-apartments of the royal princes in the palace (Clericus), but a room in the latter, where, according to Eastern custom, the beds, *i.e.* mattresses and coverlets, were kept (Keil). In this recess, usually uninhabited, a temporary refuge was obtained from Athaliah's rage. 2. *By private upbringing in the temple.* Not in the holy of holies (Targum), to which Athaliah had no access, but in one of the buildings on the outer wall, in which the high priest resided with his wife. Fetched at the first convenient opportunity from their dangerous proximity to Athaliah in the palace, the young child and his nurse were for six years lodged in the priest's house. Here his training must have been both carefully and successfully attended to, as his after-career showed (Prov. xxii. 6). From the priest's lips he would receive instruction in the Law of God (Mal. ii. 7); from his aunt, learn to love and practise the religion of his great and good ancestors, Jehoshaphat and Asa.

Learn: 1. The ease with which God can defeat the projects of the wicked. 2. The tender care God takes of children, especially of such as belong to the covenant. 3. The blessing of possessing pious parents and kinsmen. 4. The value of early instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion. 5. The safety of those whom God keeps. 6. The advantage of spending one's early years in the house of God.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This chapter records first those careful preparations of Jehoiada which eventuated in the safe proclaiming of Joash king (vers. 1—11); then the tragic demonstration and tragic end of Athaliah (vers. 12—15); and lastly, the beneficent action of Jehoiada over people and king, to the complete restoration of the worship and temple-services of the true God (vers. 16—21). The chapter is very closely paralleled by 2 Kings xi. 4—21; while the characteristic and to be expected differences on the part of our text are very conspicuous. These will be noted as they occur. While each compiler so definitely keeps on that side of the line which answers the main purpose of his history, in the abundant material common to both, and to which both resorted, all harmonizes still with the supposed objects of the two works respectively.

Ver. 1.—**Jehoiada strengthened himself** (see our note, ch. xii. 1; xiii. 7). He nerved himself with courage, and that courage which results from conviction of duty and of ripe time to achieve it. **The captains of hundreds** (or, *centurions of the royal guards*) are not mentioned in the parallel by name, but the significant mention there (2 Kings xi. 5—7) of five detachments (three "third parts," *plus* "two parts" of another body) tally with the number *five*, who *are* here mentioned by name. The five detachments probably summed up a force of nominally five hundred. It is interesting to note how often high religious enterprises have been due to the trusting mutual co-operation of very few to begin with, and them awakened and led by one. Of no one of these five named here is anything known more to his honour than this—that his name *is* here recorded. It is said with the most perfect simplicity of even Hebrew language, that he **took them with him in covenant.**

Ver. 2.—No mention is made in the parallel of the **Levites,** whom our writer is sure to signalize. **The fathers of Israel.** The sacredness of the phrase made it dear, above the narrowness of the distinctive appellation *Judah*, though the worthies all were gathered, as just implied, out of "Judah."

Ver. 3.—**All the congregation;** *i.e.* all who have been mentioned in vers 1 and 2; for so the parallel makes plain. **Made a covenant.** This was the second wider and more embracing covenant. *This* covenant is between all the gathered representatives and the young king, Jehoiada no doubt putting all things into shape. **And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign.** The *he* is Jehoiada, as of course. In view of the last clause of ver. 4—in the parallel, "Jehoiada *showed* them the king's son"—the likelier rendering of our text here is *Behold the king's son; he shall reign, as*, etc. **As the Lord hath said of the sons of David** (see ch. vi. 16; vii. 18; 2 Sam. vii. 12; 1 Kings ii. 4; ix. 5). The hereditary nature of the monarchy (2 Sam. vii.), pervaded ever by the spirit of the covenant, is evidently glanced at. It is probable that the existence of Joash was news to those to whom Jehoiada, as the parallel has it, "*showed* . . . the king's son," so that double significance lies in the word "showed."

Ver. 4.—The first thing that is to be observed is the distinct and repeated mention of the *Levites*, as those on whom the critical and onerous service that came of Jehoiada's resolution was devolved, while the parallel does not so much as mention them. It may next be noted that our first and second verses state the part that "the captains of hundreds" were called to perform in *collecting* the requisite number of Levites from the provincial cities of Judah. And once more it may be noted that whereas, while we abide close by our own text alone, nothing in the description of our vers. 4—10 occasions material difficulty, even when the perplexity, which is considerable, *does* enter, on consulting and endeavouring to reconcile the parallel, it is with extreme probability due to our not making sufficient allowance for the fact that the matter of the two accounts does not so much offer itself for reconciliation as for concurrent acceptance. We have now to follow the description of our own text. **Of you entering on the sabbath**; *i.e.* of you who enter on your period of duty on such a sabbath. See ver. 8, the "men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go out on the sabbath." This alludes, as the next clause definitely says, to the weekly courses of the Levites, as described in 1 Chron. ix. 25; xxiv.; xxv.—the incoming and outgoing companies. **Porters of the doors**; *i.e.* "keepers of the doors of the temple" (1 Chron. ix. 19). This may correspond with the middle clause of ver. 6 in the parallel.

Ver. 5.—**A third part . . . at the king's house.** It seems impossible to refer this to the royal palace, as some suppose from ver. 19 in the parallel. It probably designates the place where the child had been living in concealment. This portion of the description appears to correspond with the last clause of ver. 5 in the parallel. **At the gate of the foundation.** The Hebrew text here is יְסוֹד (Exod. xxix. 12; Lev. iv. 7; Hab. iii. 13); in the parallel סוּר, a name only found there, and unintelligible—probably a corruption of the other word. The gate of the foundation is supposed to have stood at that corner of the area which was strengthened by additional works, where was the ravine separating Moriah and the hill to the south. **All the people.** Evidently the miscellaneous outside people are not here intended, who were not entrusted with the secret and the surprise that was to be, but the same *all the people* as are unmistakably designated in ver. 10; *i.e.* all who were appointed to officiate. The last clause in each of vers. 5, 6, 7 in the parallel go strongly to confirm the position that "the king's house" so far does not intend the royal palace, but such part of the house of the Lord as had been, and then still was, "about the king" (ver. 7, parallel); in order to keep watch "about the king," they were set to keep watch of a certain part of "the house of the Lord."

Ver. 6.—**But let none come . . . save the priests.** Through this little chink we get some light confirmatory of the concurrent jurisdiction of the account in the parallel. The *express* caution of this clause shows that there were others about, and others officiating, beside the Levites, who only have been mentioned hitherto in our text, except under the most generic designation (as before, so again in last clause of this verse) of "all the people." The last clause of this verse may cover the contents of ver. 7 in the parallel. The distinction between "the courts of the house of the Lord" (ver. 5), and "the house of the Lord" (ver. 6) is, of course, quite apparent.

Ver. 7.—**And the Levites shall compass the king.** The matter of ver. 8 in the parallel suggests nothing inconsistent with the express mention of the Levites here, but rather that the word "Levites" is desiderated there, and its significance perhaps accidentally overlooked, when the writer of Kings was using the original authorities and sources of his history.

Ver. 8.—**All Judah**; *i.e.* all those of Judah's provincial cities who had been honoured with summons to join in this great and solemn enterprise. **Dismissed not the courses**; *i.e.* the provincial Levites cooperated with the regulars of Jerusalem.

Ver. 9.—**Shields . . . King David's . . . in the house of God.** Some think these may have been the shields of gold that King David took from the servants of Hadadezer (2 Sam. viii. 7, 11).

Ver. 10.—**All the people**; *i.e.*, again, all those, not being Levites and priests, who had been trusted to assist. The parallel (ver 11) summarizes them under the name *the guard*. It may be just noted, in passing, that, while the Hebrew text has in both places "shoulder," *i.e.* for the "side" of this verse, and the "corner" of the parallel, the Revised Version has harmonized the rendering, electing the rendering *side*. **From the right side of the temple to the left side.** This is equivalent to saying, those composing the guard were placed on the south and north sides. **Along by the altar.** This was the altar of burnt offerings in front of the porch, and close by which the young "king stood at his pillar," or on his *pedestal* (ver. 13), the rows of the guard bristling with weapons before and behind and round about him.

Ver. 11.—**Then they brought out.** The parallel (ver. 12) has, "*he* brought out," etc. The last clause of our verse harmonizes even this simple point, indicating that the "they" designates "Jehoiada and his sons;" of which group Jehoiada himself was, of course, the greatest part. It will be noted that it is not said from what exact place Joash was brought out. **Put upon him the crown and . . . the testimony.** It is quite unnecessary, at any rate, to suppose that the *testimony*, as well as the *crown*, was *put on the head* of

Joash. It may be taken for granted that the testimony was put into his *hands* (Deut. xvii. 18—20; xxxi. 24—29). If something new and so out of the way as resting the testimony (*i.e.* the book of the Law) on the head were purported, it is likely that a distincter point would have been made of it. **God save the king!** Hebrew, יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ: "Let the king live!" (1 Sam. x. 24; 2 Sam. xvi. 16; 1 Kings i. 25, 31, 34, 39).

Ver. 12.—**When Athaliah heard the noise.** The parallel (2 Kings xi. 13—16) shows only two differences of any noteworthiness, and these will come under notice next verse. *The noise*; Hebrew, the voice; *i.e.* no doubt the voices of the people. **Praising.** The Hebrew is the piel participle; our corresponding phrase would be, "singing out the praises of the king," *i.e.* not any personal praises, but such as the cries of "Long live the king!" or, as our Authorized Version has it, "God save the king!"

Ver. 13.—**At his pillar** (see note on ver. 10). **At the entering in.** The parallel (2 Kings xi. 14) has "as the manner was" (בַּמִּשְׁפָּט *vice* בַּמָּבוֹא). The reading in the parallel is quite explainable by such references as 2 Kings xxiii. 3; ch. xxxiv. 31). **Such as taught.** Piel participle of יָדַע; the meaning here probably being not literally the teaching confraternity as such, but the leaders, and in particular those who were appointed on this occasion to lead. **Treason!** קֶשֶׁר; interesting references are 2 Sam. xv. 12; 1 Kings xvi. 20; Isa. viii. 12; Jer. xi. 9; Ezek. xxii. 25. *The* idea of the word is *conspiracy*, and Athaliah's eye read this at once, and not less promptly, that it amounted to *treason* to her.

Ver. 14.—**Brought out,** וַיּוֹצֵא, for "commanded" in the parallel, וַיְצַו; and this is probably right, the Hebrew in our text probably a clerical or copyist's error. **The ranges;** שְׂדֵרוֹת. This word is found only in three other places, viz. twice in the parallel (its vers. 8, 15), Revised Version "ranks," and in 1 Kings vi. 9, where it is rendered in the Authorized Version "the boards," but in the Revised Version "the *planks*," and margin "rows." The ranges are commonly supposed to mean the ranks or rows of soldiers. The Vulgate (*septa templi*) has understood them to mean the precincts of the temple. The indications of the remarkable but not uncommon prepositional expression, אֶל־מִבֵּית (enjoying the analogy of other compounded prepositional expressions, as אֶל־מִנֶּגֶב; אֶל־מִחוּץ) favours the idea that Jehoiada said, Have her forth from inside "the house of the Lord" (ver. 12), *to within your ranks*, and there take care to make a way for her, no one with immature zeal following to slay her *there*, at the jeopardy of his own life, for under no case let her be slain in the house of the Lord.

Ver. 16.—**Between him** The Revised Version reads "himself," which is the evident meaning. The parallel leaves out, however, mention of Jehoiada as party to the covenant, viewing him rather as *the* promoter of it.

Ver. 17.—**The house of Baal.** It becomes plain that some building had been actually reared alongside, so to say, of the very temple itself, for Baal. **Slew Mattan** (Deut. xiii. 6, 9). **Brake . . . his images;** Hebrew, צַלְמָיו; this is the more pronounced word, distinguished from מַצֵּבוֹת.

Ver. 18.—**Jehoiada appointed;** *i.e.* reappointed or restored. **The offices;** פְּקֻדּוֹת. Numb. iii. 32, 36; iv. 16; xvi. 29; 1 Chron. xxiii. 11; xxiv. 3, 19; xxvi. 30; ch. xvii. 14; xxiii. 18; xxiv. 11; xxvi 11; see also Ps. cix. 8; Isa. x. 3 (comp. Job x. 12). **The priests.** There should, no doubt, be found the conjunction "and" after this word and before "the Levites," whom David had distributed (so 1 Chron. xxiv. 1—19; xxv. 8—31). **In the Law of Moses** (Numb. xviii. 1—7; xxxviii. 2). **With rejoicing . . . singing . . . David** (1 Chron. xxiii. 5; xxv. 1, 2, 5—7; and our ch. xxix. 25—30).

Ver. 19.—**The porters** (1 Chron. xxvi. 1—12).

Ver. 20.—**The high gate.** There is some doubt as to what this gate was, whether the temple gate of ch. xxvii. 3, the chief gate of the outer court, or whether it was *merely* a palace gate, and not identified also with the precincts of the temple. It is called in the parallel "the gate of the guard"

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—25.—*The time of action, after six years' waiting.* In the first verse of this chapter, so full of the indications of the ruling providence of God, alike in his raising up a priest like Jehoiada, and in the marriage alliance which Jehoiada had formed with the sister of the king, we are told that this priest "strengthened himself," or *took courage*, and proceeded also therewith to take measures to bring the hidden heir to the throne to light, and to place on his head the crown. It is not necessary to understand this to imply that courage had been lacking to him before for this work, but that, till the time was ripe, he had not girded himself to the enterprise. We may notice—

I. THE PATIENT WAITING OF JEHOIADA. To men of action, waiting is a hard task. Possibly simply the infancy and youngest childhood of Joash advised that waiting. How could the scene have been made one-half as effective as it was while Joash was but an infant? But there may have been other reasons, and some of them easily imaginable, in the state and temper of the kingdom, for the delay. Six years, at any rate, did he "rest, and the seventh" he rose up to work—six years, not one of which was free from anxiety and danger. Many a time must he have turned over the whole matter in thought, and prayed over it, and with his God-fearing wife developed the plan till now the seventh year came.

II. THE WISE ACTION OF JEHOIADA. As politician, statesman, Churchman, he is a good example. By concerting methods of proceeding with ever-widening circles of co-operation (the captains of hundreds, the Levites, the chiefs of the fathers, etc., vers. 1, 2), he obviates the danger and almost the possibility of any breakdown; he gains sympathy; he gives to enthusiasm its natural springs, and to public spirit legitimate impulse, and so carries all to a successful issue.

III. THE RELIGIOUS SERVICE OBSERVED, AND THE DISTINCTNESS AND DIRECTNESS WITH WHICH THE PRINCIPLE AND SANCTION OF RELIGION WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE WHOLE PROCEEDING. The meeting ("congregation") gathered in the house of the Lord. The meeting made a "covenant" with the king there—he challenging it, evidently. And the priest, faithful to his knowledge, and faithful to *his own faith*, lays down distinctly the common ground and the sacred bond of their co-operation: "Behold, the king's son shall reign, *as the Lord hath said* of the sons of David" (ver. 3).

IV. THE MODEL RELIGIOUS CARE WITH WHICH THE HOUSE OF GOD WAS GUARDED AGAINST ANY ACCIDENTAL PROFANATION. The priests and Levites on the one hand, and the people on the other hand, all had their places and work assigned to them, with every precaution and warning (vers. 6—10).

V. THE CEREMONY OF THE CORONATION, WITH ITS CENTRAL FEATURE—AN ALMOST SACRAMENTAL CELEBRATION—OF THE TESTIMONY LAID UPON THE KING. Whether, as some think, that with the crown of gold, the testimony, the book of the Law, was for a moment rested upon his head—the better crown by far of the two—or whether it was put into his hands, is very immaterial. The act was a most suggestive one, and a most impressive one, and one which, to the end of the life of Joash, now so young, might well be a memory of real religious usefulness. We do not read of any previous instance of the kind. It may be that it was thought of as a remembrancer specially suited to the very tender age of the young king.

VI. THE EVIL-DOING OF ATHALIAH NOW AT LAST SILENCED FOR EVER. The voice of priest and people was one now. And the voice of these was also one with the voice of God. And too surely, even if it were the first time, for "so long a time," the voice of fear and of conscience spoke at one, from the lips of the doomed woman Athaliah.

VII. THE VOWS TAKEN AFRESH HEREUPON BY HIMSELF AND ALL THE PEOPLE AND THE KING. These vows were in the shape, apparently, of a *covenant*—the contracting parties being the priest in the name of the Lord his God on the one side, and on the other the people and the king (ver. 16). Are we not forcibly reminded here how right it is and how *needful* that the servants of God, in the sense of being public ministers of his truth, of religion, of the Church, should feel it their solemn duty not only to give instruction and the best of it, but to make earnest *appeal* to the people, and from time to time urge and lovingly challenge them to *decision* in matters of their religious life?

VIII. THE WORK OF PRACTICAL REFORMATION AT ONCE BEGUN, THE PEACE OF THE LAND ENGAGED IN THAT WORK, AND THE GLADNESS OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE IN IT.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The constituents of success.* It was no light work that Jehoiada had in hand. He had need to "strengthen himself," as we are told that he did (ver. 1). To effect a revolution in a kingdom is either a very guilty or a very noble deed. It can only be justified by the most grave conditions and by a reasonable prospect of success. When, as on this occasion, it is imperatively demanded, and when, as now it is boldly and effectively accomplished, a very great work of patriotism and philanthropy is wrought; and it is not only man who is served, but God also. On the other hand, to undertake such an achievement without adequate cause and without sufficient means, is to plunge a country into civil strife and to ensure the spilling of much blood and the desolation of many homes. Jehoiada succeeded in his great undertaking, and his success was due to many things. These things are the constant constituents of prosperity everywhere. They are—

I. A SENSE OF SACRED DUTY. Jehoiada was not seeking his own exaltation; he was concerned that the purpose of God was not being fulfilled, and he was desirous of acting in such a way that the will of God should be done in the land, "as the Lord hath said" (ver. 3). Men often carry a purpose into execution because they are animated by a strong, energizing ambition; but they may also be quickened and sustained by a nobler end. They may be charged with a commission from God; they may be filled with a sense of what they owe to him. And a profound persuasion that God has called us to execute a certain work has again and again proved a most powerful inspiration.

II. COURAGE AND COMMAND ON THE PART OF THE LEADER (OR LEADERS). Jehoiada had made up his mind that the thing was now to be done; "The king's son *shall reign*," he said. And he went about the work of the restoration of the royal house of David with the firmness of fearlessness. He took a commanding tone, knowing that the moment of revolution is not the time for divided counsels. "This is the thing that ye shall do," he said (ver. 4); they did "according to all things Jehoiada . . . commanded" (ver. 8). Had there been any hesitancy on his part, any lack of decision or resolution, the attempt might have broken down. In perilous times, when great issues are at stake, we must not object to, but rather admire and sustain, the vigour and the determination of our leader.

III. THE GREATEST POSSIBLE CO-OPERATION. Jehoiada called to his aid the military (ver. 1), the ecclesiastics (ver. 2), the people (ver. 3). We should invite all to help on whose willingness and fidelity we can depend.

IV. A CONSCIENTIOUS REGARD FOR WHAT IS RIGHT. Jehoiada wanted to make the most effective arrangement of those who were to act at the critical moment, but he would not have any violation of sacred law under any circumstances (ver. 6). It is our bounden duty to neglect no measures that are likely to work toward the desired end; but in all our arrangements, with this in view, we must stop at the point of disobedience to the Divine Word. Even success itself, however ardently we may desire it, and however devotedly we may have been pursuing it, must be renounced if it cannot be won without the sacrifice of conscience. It is often bought too dearly; and the price is always too high when it includes even the small change of conscientious scruples.

V. THE GREATEST POSSIBLE WISDOM IN CONTRIVANCE. The outworking and execution of the most sagacious measures (vers. 3—10).

VI. BOLDNESS AT THE MOMENT OF EXECUTION. (Ver. 11.) Caution, perhaps secrecy, up to a certain hour; then openness and even daring will win the prize.

VII. A REVERENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GREAT DISPOSER OF EVENTS.—C.

Vers. 11—15.—*Sin surprised at its failure.* The success of this revolution, so long prepared and so admirably accomplished by Jehoiada, involved the ruin of one "wicked woman" (ch. xxiv. 7). It was inevitable that Athaliah must perish; here we have the account of her fall. We have before us—

I. SIN SURPRISED AT ITS OWN FAILURE. This *coup d'état* evidently came upon Athaliah with surprise. The twelfth verse describes the action of one that is both astonished and alarmed, who takes hasty measures to learn what is happening, and to provide for her own interests. Suddenly and unexpectedly the blow fell upon her head. She was pursuing her evil course, reckoning on future years of power and possession, and in the very midst of her iniquity judgment overtook and overthrew her. How continually does this happen, though it may be on a smaller scale and in humbler spheres! Sin appears to succeed, holds up its head in triumph for a while, defies all justice, human and Divine; then suddenly the ground opens beneath its feet, and it is swallowed up. Its temporary success is only an incident in its short-lived career; it is a stage on its way to failure and humiliation. The foolish man does not understand this; he thinks it is a proof that God is afar off or is quite indifferent; he takes it as a sign that he may safely disregard the solemn warnings of God's Word. But he *is* foolish; he does not understand the course of things. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be *destroyed for ever*" (Ps. xcii. 7; see also Ps. lxxiii. 2—20). We may be surprised and pained at the prosperity of the wicked, at the enthronement of the sanguinary and the selfish. Where is God's righteousness? where is the penalty of sin, we ask? Wait, and we shall see. The end will come before long. The shameless usurper, man or woman, will perish; the guilty empire will be overthrown. Suddenly or gradually their fate will fall upon them. "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment!" Nor is it only the man or woman that rises to eminence and to a great estate who will prove the truth of this. Any one who hardens himself against God stands in the most serious danger of being "suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy," like the guilty woman at Jerusalem.

II. Enthusiasm under a wise control. There must have been the greatest excitement raised and felt on this occasion. Everything contributed to kindle popular feeling and to raise it to its highest point. When they surrounded the little child and anointed him with the sacred oil, and put the crown on his young head and cried, "God save the king!" we may be sure that the emotion which on some supreme occasions fills and fires a multitude of people, was then as intense as it could be (see ver. 13); but Jehoiada held it under a wise control. And when Athaliah appeared, and when they looked at her, and remembered what she had done and what a blight and a curse she had been to the land, they might well have slain her on the spot. But the priest of Jehovah would not have the sacred place profaned with her blood, and he stayed their hand; they conducted her beyond the sacred precincts, and not till then did they inflict justice upon her. Feeling should never rise too high to be controlled by our judgment, especially strong feeling against any individual, man or woman. If we let our feelings carry our judgment along with them, we shall be sure to do that which we shall afterwards regret and which may be quite irreparable. Nor is any man at liberty to say that he is constitutionally impulsive and cannot control himself. It may be a more difficult duty in some natures than it is in others; but it is every man's serious and sacred obligation to rule his own spirit, to maintain a mastery over his affections and his impulses and his resentments. This is to be the excellent result of daily discipline, of strenuous endeavour, of constant prayer.

III. The service of destruction. "Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down," etc. (ver. 17). As a rule, the way in which we serve Christ wisely and permanently is the act of construction, of building up. Better to sow a seed than to pluck up a root; better to raise a Christian sanctuary than to knock down a heathen temple; better to implant thoughts of reverence and love than to rebuke and wither the profane word or the evil habit. But there is a time to plant and also to pluck up; a time to kill as well as to heal; a time to break down as well as to build up (Eccles. iii. 2, 3). There are evil and hurtful people to be put out of the room, pernicious books and papers to be put into the fire, ruinous institutions to be suppressed by the strong hand of law, deadly practices to be sternly forbidden. There is a time when "slaughter is God's daughter," when the destructive hand is the organ of the will of Jesus Christ.—C.

Ver. 16.—*The basis of national prosperity.* Jehoiada knew that it would be of very little use to be rid of one ruler and to place another on the throne unless the nation itself could be bound in strong bonds to Jehovah, its true and almighty Sovereign. Hence the action he took as here described.

I. The true bases of national prosperity. Not a population outgrowing that of all other countries; nor an army and navy such as no other nation can equip; nor a full national exchequer; nor an extensive and extending territory. A country may have any or even all of these things, and yet be declining in strength and on the road to utter weakness and decay. The foundation of a people's strength is in *the possession of the Divine favour.* And this because: 1. God will grant his Divine blessing to those that seek him. 2. And because God "loves righteousness and hates iniquity," whether in the individual man or in the nation; and it is in "the fear of the Lord" that all moral and spiritual integrity rests as in its very root and source. That people, therefore, which would live and thrive must be a people seeking God's face and acting in accordance with his will. Then will it enjoy his blessing—that favour and succour with which it cannot fail to prosper, without which it is bound to fall.

II. A SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH. Jehoiada took advantage of the dynastic revolution to make it an occasion for entering into a solemn covenant "between all the people and between the king, that they *should be the Lord's people.*" The time was suitable for this renewal of their covenant with God. He himself, a priest of the Lord, had headed, indeed had originated and effected, the overthrow of the old idolatrous *régime;* the young king was to be placed on the throne as a worshipper of Jehovah, and now they might pledge themselves, in the most solemn and binding form, to be loyal to that Divine Lord whose, indeed, they were by a thousand ties. It was wisely and worthily done. Acts of national acknowledgment of God must need be rare. But it is open to Churches, to families, and especially to individual men, to *renew their vows* of attachment to their Divine Lord; to affirm to themselves or to declare to their friends and neighbours that they are "the Lord's people." It is right and wise to employ any and every favourable opportunity of doing this. Such opportunity is found in: 1. The time when the soul returns to God from the far country of indifference and disloyalty, and realizes that it is admitted to the Father's home. 2. The time when the spirit is recalled from a temporary lapse, and again recognizes the supreme claims of a Divine Redeemer. 3. When we meet one another at the table of the Lord, and there are vividly reminded of the supreme fact that he "gave himself for us" unto shame and death. 4. On the reception of any special, personal, or domestic mercies at the kind hand of our heavenly Father.—C.

Ver. 21.—*First purity, then peace.* "And the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword." We can conceive of many occasions when the "slaying of a woman with the sword" *should* not and *would* not lead to quietude, but to unrest, to turbulence, and to strife. But this "wicked woman," Athaliah, was the impersonation of usurpation and of idolatry. To slay her was to "put away the evil thing" from above and from the midst of the people of God. It was an act of purgation, of cleansing of the nation's conscience. It was a spiritual upheaval, throwing off a heavy weight that rested on the spirit of obedience. It was an act of excision, cutting off the guilty "right hand" that the "whole body" might be saved. If there be in the way of our conscientious adhesion to the cause, and engagement in the service, of Christ any such obstacle as was this Athaliah to the people of Judah, then no half-measures will suffice. The evil, whatever it be, must be slain with the sword, must be "done to death," must be relentlessly rooted out; then, and not till then, will there be quiet through all the region of the soul. We may find this Athaliah of ours in—

I. AN INSINCERE PROFESSION OF FAITH we no longer hold, and consequently a disloyal practice in which we do not believe.

II. AN IMMORAL OR INJURIOUS HABIT, which may be secretly cherished, but which we know to be guilty.

III. AN UNLAWFUL GAIN, which our conscience condemns.

IV. A COMPANIONSHIP (or companionships), which cannot be retained while Jesus Christ is honoured and obeyed.—C.

Vers. 1—11.—*The coronation of Joash.* I. PREPARATIONS FOR THE CEREMONY. (Vers. 1—10.) 1. *Jehoiada's covenant with the captains.* (Ver. 1.) (1) The time. In the seventh year of Joash's life, when Jehoiada felt that matters were ripe for a revolution. Six years of Athaliah as queen had put the people out of love with her person and practices. Even those about her court were becoming intolerant of her tyrannies and idolatries. Besides, six years had transformed the babe Jehoshabeath had rescued into a boy, a miniature king, who would much more easily and effectually arrest the popular imagination than an infant in arms. And, finally, Jehoiada had himself had leisure to watch the current of the times, to learn the temper and disposition of the people, to test the characters of those upon whose aid he must rely, to acquaint himself with all that would need to be done, and generally to mature his plans. In the seventh year he judged that the hour had struck for an attempt to liberate the country from the yoke of Athaliah, and to restore the crown of David to its rightful heir. Many projects otherwise promising are lost by being launched forth prematurely, and many fail through want of "striking while the iron is hot" (Eccles. iii. 1—8). (2) The persons. Jehoiada called to his aid five centurions of the queen's body-guard, whom he probably knew to be disaffected towards the queen and favourable to a change in the government (2 Kings xi. 4), and whose names are given—Azariah, "whom Jehovah aids;" the son of Jeroham, "who is loved;" Ishmael, "whom God hears," the son of Jehohanan, "Jehovah is gracious;" Azariah, the son of Obed, "worshipping;" Maaseiah, "work of Jehovah," the son of Adaiah, "whom Jehovah adorns;" Elishaphat, "whom God judges," the son of Zichri, "famous;"—all men of renown; good, if their characters were reflected in their names; capable, as their civil rank showed. (3) The object. To depose Athaliah—trebly lawful, because, as a usurper, she had climbed into the throne by bloodshed and violence, and had therefore no just title to the sceptre; because, as a wicked ruler, her longer continuance in power would endamage the best interests, and even endanger the existence of the state; and because, so long as she wore the crown, the real heir to the throne was defrauded of his rights. Whether, in the first instance, Jehoiada mentioned the existence of Joash is doubtful. 2. *The nation's covenant with the king.* (1) The representatives of the people summoned. The captains to whom this work was entrusted went about (ver. 2), no doubt privately in Judah, and invited all the Levites and heads of fathers' houses in every city to a secret convention in Jerusalem. (2) The people's representatives convened. In obedience to the high priest's call, those invited by his messengers came. The congregation consisted of the priests and Levites, the heads of fathers' houses, and the captains of the guards, with their men (?). (3) The people's legitimate sovereign produced. The meeting was held in the temple court. At the proper moment Joash was produced (ver. 3; 2 Kings xi. 4), and the story of his preservation rehearsed. (4) The people's duty pointed out. Skilfully done by Jehoiada, who simply said, "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David;" it was an intimation that the crown belonged to Joash by Divine appointment, and a hint to them to see that Jehovah's promise to their ancestor should not fail. (5) The people's assent given. The effect of Jehoiada's action in producing Joash and in citing the Messianic promise (2 Sam. vii. 12) was electrical. With one heart and voice the people pledged themselves to the revolution, to depose Athaliah and to crown Joash. 3. *The arrangements for the coup d'état.* (1) The disposition of the priests and Levites. These should be divided into two main bodies, those who entered on their temple duties (ver. 4; 2 Kings xi. 5) on the sabbath (the day fixed for the revolution), and those who retired from them (ver. 8; 2 Kings xi. 7). The *former* should again divide themselves into three companies. Of these, the first should act as "porters of the doors," or "keepers of the thresholds," *i.e.* were to mount guard at the gates of the temple (cf. 1 Chron. ix. 19); the second should stand "at the king's house," which may have been the apartments or cloister in which Joash was concealed (Keil), but more probably signified the palace (ver. 15), the approach from which to the temple it was desirable to guard; the third should take up a position "at the gate of the foundation," or "the gate Jesod"—whether a temple gate (Stanley, Keil) or a palace gate (Bertheau) is uncertain. (On the discrepancies between these appointments and those in Kings, consult the Exposition.) The *latter*, i.e. the priests and Levites retiring from duty, should act as the king's body-guard when he entered into and departed from the temple. This work should be deputed to them alone, since they only as "holy" persons could pass into the temple. As their duty would be to ensure the safety of the king's person, they would be armed—"every man with his weapons in his hand." To them also should be entrusted the task of seeing that no unauthorized person came within the precincts of the sacred edifice, and of executing judgment on such as without warrant did. (2) The disposition of the people. These should be stationed in the court in which stood the brazen altar of Solomon. (3) The disposition of the "captains of hundreds" and their men. These, whom the Chronicler does not overlook while assigning the principal part in the forthcoming ceremony to the priests and Levites, should be employed to preserve order amongst the people, and guard against the possibility of attack from any of the queen's party who might become cognizant of what was going on.

II. PROCEEDINGS IN THE CEREMONY. (Vers. 8—11.) 1. *The carrying out of the above arrangements.* When the sabbath fixed for the execution of the plot arrived, "the Levites and all the men of Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada had commanded." Each priest, with his assistant Levites, went to his appointed place—those that entered on their temple duties to their different guards, as above explained; those that retired from service, instead of departing to their homes—"for Jehoiada dismissed not the courses"—to the new work of guarding the king's person, also as above explained. The former mounted guard at the temple gates, the latter assumed their places inside the temple (inner) court, "from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the temple," so as to be "by the king round about." The people generally stood in the outer court, the centurions and their hundreds forming a circle round the inner court, between it and the people, so as to prevent any unauthorized person from passing within the house. 2. *The arming of the captains.* "Jehoiada delivered to them the spears, bucklers, and shields, that had been King David's, which were in the house of God" (ver. 9). These were intended for themselves and their men (Bertheau), either because they had come into the temple unarmed (Keil), having left their weapons in the palace on leaving duty (Bähr), or because Jehoiada wished David's crown to be won back by David's weapons (Ewald, Stanley), or perhaps he judged that, as the work they were about to be employed in was God's, so the weapons they should use should also be God's. 3. *The production of the boy-prince.* When everything was ready, Joash, encompassed by armed Levites, marched from the priest's house into the temple court, and took up his station at one of the pillars leading into the inner court (ch. xxiii. 13; 2 Kings xi. 14), so as to be seen by the priests and Levites in the inner, and the captains and people in the outer court. 4. *The coronation of the heir to the throne.* Jehoiada (with the people assenting) placed upon the brow of Joash the royal diadem, "probably a band studded with jewels—the first direct example of a coronation" (Stanley). 5. *The delivering to him of the testimony.* Not the *insignia regia,* i.e. the regalia of the kingdom (Clericus), or the phylacteries of Deut. vi. 8 (Grotius), or Samuel's laws of the kingdom (1 Sam. viii. 10); but the Law of Moses, often called the "testimony" (Exod. xxv. 16; xxvii. 21; Numb. ix. 15; x. 11; xvii. 4), which was now presented to the young king in the form of a roll, to indicate that his life and government both should be regulated by its precepts (Deut. xvii. 18—20). 6. *The anointing of the new sovereign.* Done by Jehoiada and his sons, this symbolized Joash's consecration to a theocratic or holy office, that of ruling over Jehovah's people. So Saul (1 Sam. x. 1) and David (1 Sam. xvi. 11) were anointed by Samuel, Solomon by Zadok the priest (1 Kings i. 39), and Jehu by Elisha's messenger (2 Kings ix. 6). 7. *The acclamation of the people.* When the coronation ceremony ended, the people clapped their hands (2 Kings xi. 12) in expression of their joy (Ps. xlvii. 1), and shouted, as their wont was at coronations, "God save the king!" or, "Let the king live!" (1 Sam. x. 24; 2 Sam. xvi. 16). (On "clapping of hands," see the *Theological Monthly*, February, 1889, p. 135.)

Learn: 1. It is not always wrong for ministers of religion to take part in politics. 2. There are times when rebellion against the powers that be is a solemn duty. 3. Neither God's house nor God's day can be put to a better use than to set a crown upon the head of God's anointed. 4. In Church and state alike each man has his own place and work. 5. Kings may expect their thrones to be stable if these are erected on the good will of their subjects. 6. No sovereign can rule well who takes not the Law of God for his guide. 7. A great and good man in troubled times invaluable to Church or state. What could Judah have done without Jehoiada? 8. No man can miss the destiny God has in store for him.—W.

Vers. 12—15.—*The fall of Athaliah.* I. A STARTLED QUEEN. (Vers. 12, 13.) 1. *An unusual sound.* Secretly as the coronation of Joash had been conducted, Athaliah's quick ear caught the noise of trampling feet, clapping hands, and shouting voices that issued from the temple on the other side of the Tyropœan valley. Guilty consciences, of sovereigns, as of common sinners, are prone to be startled by strange sounds (Job xviii. 11, 12); cf. 'Macbeth' (act ii. sc. 2), "I have done the deed: didst thou not hear a noise?" 2. *An unexpected sight.* Mustering her guards, Athaliah proceeded from her palace across the bridge that spanned the valley, and entered the temple court, when a most unwelcome spectacle met her gaze—a boy standing on a raised platform in front of the inner court, probably the brazen scaffold of Solomon (ch. vi. 13), his head encircled with a diadem, his hand grasping a roll of parchment as if it were a sceptre; beside him Jehoiada the priest, the princes of the people, and the Levitical trumpeters; around him all the people of the land, rejoicing and singing. 3. *An unrestrained cry.* Whether or not Athaliah recognized in Joash one of Ahaziah's sons, whom she fancied she had murdered six years before, she had no difficulty in comprehending the situation. A usurper herself, she perfectly understood the scene she beheld to mean revolution. Rending her garments in horror at the spectacle (2 Kings vi. 30; Ezra ix. 3), and perhaps in involuntary acknowledgment that the hour of her overthrow had struck (1 Sam. xv. 27, 28; 1 Kings xi. 30), she likewise rent the air with a shriek of "Treason! treason!" (cf. 2 Kings ix. 23).

II. AN AVENGING PRIEST. (Vers. 14, 15.) 1. *A charge to the captains.* (1) Concerning the queen. To arrest her, to lead her beyond the precincts of the temple, to put her to death. Sudden and peremptory, this order was absolutely necessary. Divine justice and public safety alike demanded Athaliah's blood. A murderess herself (ch. xxii. 10), her life was forfeit to the law (Gen. ix. 6). An idolatress of the rankest type, she had incurred the sentence, "I will cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you" (Lev. xxvi. 30). A conspiratress, so long as she was spared the life of Joash was not secure. (2) Concerning her adherents. That they also should be put to the sword. To follow Athaliah, defend her person or champion her cause, was to be guilty of *leze majesty* against Joash, and indeed against Jehovah, whose vicegerent Joash was. 2. *Its execution by the captains.* (1) They hurried the unhappy queen beyond the precincts of the temple, that the holy place might not be polluted with human blood. (2) They conducted her forth to the vicinity of the king's stables, the people opening their ranks and making way for her to pass. (3) They slew her there, within sight of the palace she had usurped and of the temple she had desecrated. As by violence she had climbed into the throne, by violence she was hurled from it. As she had lived so doubtless she died, in unbelief and sin—a victim at once of popular fury and Divine retribution (Prov. xi. 31).

Learn: 1. That the way of transgressors is hard. 2. That the wages of sin is death. 3. That they who take the sword shall perish with the sword. 4. That verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth. 5. That with what measure one metes it shall be measured to him again.—W.

Vers. 16—21.—*The close of a revolution.* I. COVENANT-MAKING. (Ver. 16.) Read in connection with 2 Kings xi. 17, this verse points to two covenant transactions. 1. *Between Jehovah and the king and people.* (1) In this the priest Jehoiada acted as Jehovah's representative—symbolizing the greater High Priest over the house of God, who in the new and better covenant of grace is to sinful men the Image of the invisible God (Heb. i. 3; iii. 1; iv. 14; v. 5). (2) Of this the object was that they, Joash and his subjects, should be Jehovah's people, observing his worship and keeping his commandments, and that he should be their God, defending them against their adversaries, and bestowing on them temporal and spiritual, individual and national prosperity. This was the substance of the covenant Jehovah had made with the nation at Sinai (Exod. xix. 3—6; Deut. v. 2; xxvi. 17, 18), and is the tenor of God's covenant with his people in the gospel (Heb. viii. 8—13). 2. *Between the king and the people.* (1) On his side that he would govern in accordance with the testimony put into his hand that day; and (2) on their side that they would be loyal to the throne on which he sat. This covenant is implicitly involved in all relationships of king and subjects. An unjust and tyrannical ruler *ipso facto* violates the contract between himself and his people, and to that extent absolves them from allegiance to his authority. Piety in the sovereign and loyalty in the people are the two best supports of an earthly throne.

II. IDOL-PURGING. In a fit of reforming zeal the excited people entered without delay on a crusade against the false worship which had been introduced and patronized by Athaliah. 1. *The temple of Baal wrecked.* This idolatrous shrine had probably been erected by Jehoram to please Athaliah (ch. xxi. 11; Josephus, 'Ant.,' ix. 7. 4), as a similar edifice had been constructed in Samaria by Ahab, under the influence of Jezebel (1 Kings xvi. 32). Most likely it stood on Mount Moriah, alongside of the temple, if not within its outer court (Thenius, Bertheau), rather than on a different elevation (Bähr). Its proximity to the temple would account for its having become so soon a prey to popular fury, as when building its vicinity to the temple suggested the idea of tearing down the temple walls for stones to construct it (ch. xxiv. 7). Now a day of Nemesis had dawned for it, as similar days had already overtaken its builders. Its walls and pillars, altars and images, were shattered in pieces. Compare the destruction of the Roman Catholic edifices in Perth on May 11, 1559, after a sermon by Knox. "The congregation [in the church of St. John's] was still undispersed, when a priest came in, went up to the altar, opened the tabernacle, and prepared to say Mass. A boy who was present said something insolent. The priest struck him; and the boy, snatching up a stone, flung it at the crucifix, which fell broken to the ground. The common instinct shot through the gathered crowd; altar, ornaments, images, in a few moments lay in ruins on the chancel floor. The saints were flung from their niches, the storied windows dashed in atoms. Then the cry rose, 'To the Greyfriars!' and in an hour or two the poor monks, started from their noonday dinner, were adrift upon the world, and their homes going up in smoke and flame into the sky" (Froude's 'History of England,' vol. vi. pp. 228, 229). "For a day or two after Knox preached his famous sermon, the besom of destruction was exceedingly busy in and about the fair city. Somebody—perhaps Knox himself—had remarked that 'if the nests were pulled down the rooks would fly away;' and so all hands were laid to the nests. Popular fury raged uncontrollably. The monasteries and chapels which had given stately adornment to the city and its environs were reduced to ruins, only the bare and broken walls remaining, and most of these gaunt wrecks speedily disappeared" (Fittis's 'Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth,' 1885, p. 81). 2. *The priest of Baal slain.* Mattan the "priestling" (the Targum), having attempted to lead the people astray, had incurred the penalty of death (Deut. xiii. 9), which was summarily inflicted, perhaps as Moses had directed, by stoning him beside the altars at which he had served. Compare the murder of Zechariah by Joash's minions in the later years of his reign (ch. xxiv. 20).

III. WORSHIP-REFORMING. (Vers. 18, 19.) 1. *Irregularities corrected.* The offices of the house of the Lord with reference to burnt offerings were arranged in accordance with the prescriptions of the Law of Moses. No worship was acceptable under the Hebrew economy that did not adhere to the regulations of that divinely inspired ritual; no worship is acceptable under the gospel dispensation that departs from the rubric laid down by Jesus in his sermon at the well (John iv. 24). 2. *Impurities prevented.* Watchers were established at the temple gates, that none should enter in who were in any respect unclean, *i.e.* ceremonially defiled. Under the Law such persons were separated from the congregation (Numb. xix. 20; Lev. xi. 24; xxii. 5), and, until they were purified, could take no part in the solemnities of Divine worship. The truth therein symbolized was that worship derives its quality from the character of the worshipper. An unclean Israelite could not render acceptable worship to a God holy as Jehovah was. Not until an atonement had been offered for his trespass by the officiating priest, and his body had been washed in pure water, could he take his place in the congregation of them who had a right to draw near to Jehovah. And neither can any render acceptable worship under the gospel who do not do so on the basis of an atonement offered for them by the great High Priest over the house of God, and with the Heaven-inspired emotions of a renewed life, "with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 19—22). 3. *Hilarities superadded.* That the service of Jehovah was designed to be a perennial fount of joy for Jehovah's people was understood and proclaimed by Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 29). Until David's time this was not so widely apprehended as might have been expected. The second king of Israel, however, discerned with penetrating vision that the worship of Jehovah should ever be accompanied with gladness (Ps. v. 11; xxxii. 11; lxviii. 3; lxxxix. 15, 16; c. 1, 2); and in order to express this idea, with the concurrence and approval of the captains of the host, he "separated to the service of the sons of Asaph and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, those who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals" (1 Chron. xxv. 1). During the reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah this part of the Divine service had been discontinued. When Joash acceded to the throne it was restored. So should Christians always serve God "with singing and rejoicing;" and this they will do in proportion as they are filled with that Spirit of which the fruit is joy (Gal. v. 22; Eph. v. 18, 19; Phil. iv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 16; 1 John i. 4).

IV. King-enthroning. (Ver. 20.) 1. *Led by the priest.* Having completed his arrangements for the restoration of the temple service, Jehoiada proceeded with what was still needful to perfect the revolution. Lifting the boy-king from the platform, he led him forth from the temple down the causeway which conducted towards the palace. 2. *Escorted by the people.* As the crowd a little before had opened its ranks to let Athaliah pass to her destruction, so now it opens them again to let the young sovereign march to his regal residence. Probably preceded by the centurions, the princes, and the heads of fathers' houses, as in the temple he had been encompassed by the Levites, he is followed by the people of the land. 3. *Conducted through the upper gate.* This, called "the gate of the guard" (2 Kings xi. 19), was not a temple door (Keil), but an entrance into the palace (Bertheau), perhaps the principal one, through which the royal guards were accustomed to pass. It was fitting that David's heir should publicly take possession of David's house. 4. *Set upon the throne.* This the natural termination of the ceremony. Joash was established upon the throne of the kingdom, the throne of his fathers, the throne which derived its authority from Jehovah alone.

V. Popular rejoicing. (Ver. 21.) 1. *The country was glad*—that the queen was slain. Her government had been a usurpation and a curse. Nobody lamented her. If she had a funeral, those who bore her to her last resting-place gave vent to their emotions, not in sobs, but in songs. If they shed tears above her sepulchre, these were tears of joy, not of grief. A terrible commentary on any one's life, that one's contemporaries, whether equals or dependents, are glad to be rid of one—to see one's career ended, one's breath stopped, and one's carcase huddled out of sight! 2. *The city was quiet*—though the queen was slain. No one dreamt of drawing a sword to avenge her assassination. Those who knew her best, who had most frequent opportunities of studying her character and observing her behaviour, had nothing to say in extenuation of her faults or in commiseration of her fate. The consciences of her people were satisfied that she had deserved her doom. Perhaps the pious among them added, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Jehovah" (Judg. v. 31).

Learn: 1. That the secret of all true prosperity, for Church or state, for society or for the individual, is piety towards God and rectitude towards man. 2. That true religion can admit of no compromise with false religion, but must aim at its extermination. 3. That in all matters of faith and practice, doctrine and duty, ritual and worship, the will of God, not the opinion of man, is the supreme rule. 4. That the enemy most requiring to be guarded against by God's worshippers is sin. 5. That the King's house for Christians is not the material temples in which they worship, but their own hearts, in which Christ desires to be enthroned. 6. That it is legitimate to rejoice over the destruction of the enemies of God and his people (Prov. xi. 10).—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

This chapter contains the entire career of Joash, and is answered to by the twelfth chapter of 2 Kings. It tells of Joash's fidelity to God, and his worship and temple, while Jehoiada's life lasted (vers. 1—14); of his departure from God and permission of idolatry afterwards (vers. 15—22); of the punishment he received at the hands of the Syrians (vers. 23, 24); and of his miserable end (vers. 25—27). The differences between our chapter and the parallel, in respect of what it both omits and supplies, are much larger than *usual*, and are very interesting and suggestive in the character of them. These points will be marked particularly in the notes underneath as they occur.

Ver. 1.—**His mother's name . . . Zibiah of Beersheba.** We do not read, in the brief account of Ahaziah, Joash's father, whom he married. Nothing is as yet known of *Zibiah*, but there must be some significance underlying the mention of her name and native place, or known place of residence. The references Amos v. 5 and viii. 14 may possibly contain the clue, in holding up Beersheba as the most idolatrous of idolatrous places. Beersheba offers another reference of unhappy associations (1 Sam. viii. 2). As a terminus of the land, "Dan to Beersheba" (Judg. xx. 1; 2 Sam. xxiv. 2;

1 Chron. xxi. 2); as a terminus of the divided Judah, "Beersheba to Mount Ephraim" (ch. xix. 4), "Geba to Beersheba" (2 Kings xxiii. 8); and as a terminus of this Judah yet reduced after the Captivity, "Beersheba to the valley of Hinnom" (Neh. xi. 30);—its mention is notorious. The references Gen. xxi. 31 and xxvi. 18, 31—33 are full of interest, as bearing on the way in which the spot is first known in Bible history.

Ver. 2.—All the days of Jehoiada. Of the "forty years" mentioned in the former verse, these "days of Jehoiada" will cover, some, at any rate, say, two years more than "twenty-two years;" for compare our vers. 6, 12—15 with the parallel, 2 Kings xii. 6, 7, 9, noting the thenceforward silence there respecting Jehoiada, and even making ample allowance for it.

Ver. 3.—That special note is made of Jehoiada's selecting of the wives may at any rate point to the suggestion that he was all a father to Joash, and both for his own sake and the kingdom's sake anxious as to the character of the women by whom a new kingly seed should take rise in place of that destroyed by Athaliah (ch. xxii. 10). Our ch. xxv. 1 leaves it probable that "Jehoadan of Jerusalem" was one of these, though it is likely enough that Joash married, whether her *or* some one else, *before* he had reached the age of twenty-one. It is also quite likely that we may read between the lines, that in selecting *two* wives for his young and loved ward, Jehoiada hoped and prayed that Joash might not fall by sin like Solomon's (1 Kings xi. 3) and that of others of the kings of both Judah and Israel.

Ver. 4.—To repair. The idea of this verb (חָדַשׁ) is that of *making new.*

Ver. 5.—To repair. The idea of this verb (חָזַק) is that of *making strong.* **From year to year.** The compound adverbial expression מִדֵּי, here used for "from," embraces the idea of "unfailingly from year to year." The command given here to the priests and Levites is expressed very differently, though in no degree contradictorily, in the parallel (see its vers. 4, 5). The addition is there found, "every man of his acquaintance;" this expression may glance at the very supposable circumstance that the priest and Levite collecting deputations would naturally go respectively to the towns and cities where they had been located beforetime. A slight ambiguity is perhaps occasioned by the impression that the fourth verse (in the parallel) produces—that the priests and Levites should wait to *receive, e.g.,* in Jerusalem. This, however, is *not* what is *said,* and need not, therefore, be made into a difficulty. **Howbeit the Levites hastened not.** We are not told *why* this delay was, nor does the subsequent narrative seem to elucidate it, further than this—that the delay somehow seemed to rest with Jehoiada, as the king appealed to him for explanation.

Ver. 6.—Jehoiada the chief; sc. *priest,* for comp. our ver. 11; ch. xix. 11; xxvi. 20. In each of these instances the Hebrew text shows הָרֹאשׁ, and the Authorized Version "chief" except inconsistently in our ver. 11. Revised Version "chief" in all the instances. The name "priest" occurs just about six hundred and sixty-six times in the Old Testament, the title "high" or "chief priest" only about twenty-six times, the first occurrence being in Lev. xxi. 10, the last Zech. vi. 11; and both set forth by the Hebrew adjective גָּדוֹל, as also in fifteen other of the occurrences. Seven times the word רֹאשׁ is the word employed, and שָׂרֵי the other two times. In these last two cases, however (Ezra viii. 24, 29; x. 5), it is not "high priests" nor "chief priests" that are perhaps even really intended, but the "princes" of the priests, or those who, for whatever reasons of personal characteristics, were *chief.* **Out of Judah and out of Jerusalem.** The statement here is precise, that the call of money was to be made both in the cities of Judah and in the metropolis Jerusalem. **The collection;** Hebrew, מַשְׂאַת; Revised Version, better, *the tax of,* etc. Of this we read in Exod. xxx. 13—15; xxxviii. 25, 26; Numb. i. 30. It was of the *uniform* amount of half a sanctuary shekel, for rich or poor, and was ordered to be set apart "for the service of the *tabernacle of the congregation,*" here called in the Authorized Version **the tabernacle of witness;** Revised Version, *the tent of the testimony.* Exodus has מוֹעֵד for our הָעֵדוּת. This source of money for the holy design of Joash is again most specifically stated in our ver. 9. The version of this whole transaction seems rather confusing as given in the parallel, where ver. 4 mentions three sources of money, without any quotation as such of the ordained tax of Moses, which was apparently the first of those three, and where ver. 8, at first blush at any rate, might seem to imply *recusant* priests. The meaning, however, is probably the contrary, the verse purporting that the priests consented to forego what they had been accustomed on receiving to apply to some personal or current-funds purpose, and who consented to forego the superintending of the outlay of the money on the repairing, that it might be done with more expedition by "scribe" and high priest" (ver. 10; comp. ver. 16; both of the parallel). All these details the writer of Chronicles passes over, only pursuing the essential business, Joash's pious resolve, the delay in its execution, and how he finally overcame the obstructive delay.

Ver. 7.—The sons of Athaliah. This verse's testimony against Athaliah's sons explains ch. xxi. 17, and is explained and corroborated by it. **That wicked woman;** Hebrew, הַמִּרְשַׁעַת; fem. noun, derivative of רֶשַׁע; meaning strictly in the abstract, "the wickedness," equal to *that incarnation of wickedness.* **All the dedicated things;** *i.e.* the holy vessels, treasure, and holy furniture of the house of the Lord, had they desecrated, and robbed them thence to squander them on their various Baals (ch. xvii. 3).

Ver. 8.—A chest; Hebrew, אֲרוֹן אֶחָד, "one chest." This is more accurately described in ver. 9 of the parallel. **Without at the gate of the house of the Lord;** *i.e.* in the court opposite the porch, and, as we learn from the parallel, by the side of the altar of burnt offering. Now, not the priests generally, but simply those who kept the door (probably the north door, Ezek. xi. 35), receiving the contributions of the people at their hands, into their own hands deposited them in the *one chest.*

Ver. 9.—(See notes on ver. 6.)

Ver. 10.—Until they had made an end; Hebrew, לְכַלֵּה, piel infin. The meaning can scarcely be till *enough* was obtained, because *day after day,* as the next verse tells us, the chest was brought; but either till those who had come that day to give had all given in their contributions, or, as some think with much less probability, till the chest was full for the day. At the same time, the clause, occupying only one word in the original, may quite possibly purport to state summarily by anticipation that the same system was observed to the end, and the method of the chest not departed from.

Ver. 11.—Unto the king's office. Not "office" in the modern technical business sense; the meaning is the care, charge, or custody of the king, the Hebrew word being פְּקֻדַּת; nor does this necessitate the supposition of the *personal* care of the king. The body of this verse leaves it quite open to possibility, in harmony with the usage of the Hebrew language and its idiom, that the process described took place, if necessary, more than once in a day, and, on the other hand, *not* necessarily every evening. The change of the number of the verb in "they emptied," etc., and the apparent statement that those who *emptied* also *carried back* the chest, betoken that while the king's scribe (1 Kings iv. 3) and the high priest's officer stood by, the usual Levite functionaries did the work. The phrase, day by day, is not necessarily equivalent to *every evening,* but to *time after time.*

Ver. 12.—Gave it to such as did the work of the service; *i.e.* the persons responsible for the work, or "that had the oversight of it" (2 Kings xii. 11). **Carpenters.** It is preferable to render here literally *workmen* or *workers.* Probably this clause purports that those *responsible,* as above, hired *masons and workmen.* **And also such as wrought.** Supply the preposition found in the Hebrew text, "to" before "such," and render again the same word (חָרָשֵׁי) literally, *workers of iron and brass.*

Ver. 13.—The work was perfected by their hands. The margin gives the literal rendering, "healing" or health, or, *i.e.*, recovery, "went up upon the work." The lively figure of the Hebrew word used (אֲרוּכָה) is very intelligible. The term is employed in only five other places, viz. Neh. iv. 7 (Authorized Version, "The walls were *made up;*" Revised Version better, *The repairing of the walls went forward*); Isa. lviii. 8; Jer. viii. 22; xxx. 17; xxxiii. 6; in each of which four instances, in both Authorized Version and Revised Version, the literal rendering "health" or "healing" is found. **In his state;** equivalent to *in its stateliness,* perhaps the idea of the Hebrew word מַתְכֻּנְתּוֹ [only used four other times, and then rendered once "tale" (Exod. v. 8), twice "composition" (ch. xxx. 32, 37), once "measure" (Ezek. xlv. 11)], being *measure,* or *proportion,* or *rate.*

Ver. 14.—And to offer withal. The insertion of the italic type in the Authorized Version "*withal*" unnecessarily helps suggest uncertainty in this rendering, while the Revised Version gives that word in the ordinary type; margin, both Authorized Version and Revised Version, gives "pestles." The Hebrew word is (הַעֲלוֹת) the hiph. infin. of the familiar verb עָלָה, or plural of עֱלִי with article prefixed; this word, however, seems to occur only once (Prov. xxvii. 22), and then in the singular number. **The rest of the money . . . made vessels for the house of the Lord.** This passage may harmonize not unsatisfactorily with the parallel (2 Kings xii. 13), and on the very suggestion of the circumstantial evidence that arises from the place in which the information of our own text is found, by laying emphasis on the expression, "*the rest* of the money." The writer of Kings meant that nothing interfered with, nothing whatsoever ran even with the execution of *the* substantial work of reparation of the building, and he neglects to record that *finally* a remnant of money being available, vessels *were* made of it for the inner furnishing of the house.

Ver. 15.—But Jehoiada . . . died; an hundred and thirty years old. This good man, husband of Jehoram's daughter (ch. xxii. 11), only comes to view in virtue of what his wife did, and what he did, on behalf of Joash the infant and Joash the king for the good of the nation or kingdom of Judah. We seem to know too little of him, and the parallel supplies considerably less than our text in Chronicles. His age, as stated in this verse when he died, seems very improbable, and for a very clear and admirable putting of the case, see Lord Arthur C. Hervey's article in Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' i. 944. There is, however, no manifest or even suspicious symptom of corruptness in the text just here, supported as it is by the Septuagint and Josephus, by the stress laid on his old age, whether it showed a hundred and thirty years, or thirty years or fifty years (as have been variously suggested) fewer; the little fact, otherwise looking very significant, that the expression, **full of days**, is used beside only of Abraham, Isaac, Job, and *David*, loses its pertinence in that very circumstance that it *is* used of David, whose age was in no way extreme. The age of the other three, however, exceeded this reputed age given to Jehoiada!

Ver. 16.—The honour done Jehoiada well belonged to him, not only for his goodness, his greatness, his practical services to the kingdom, but for the fact that those practical services had entailed the necessity of his standing *in loco regis* for some time. His royal alliance with Jehoram's daughter, and, if it were so, his extreme patriarchal age, may all have contributed to the honour now put upon him. Little stress can be laid, however, upon this last consideration, failing any other allusion to it, or any emphasized statement of what we have in our ver. 15.

Ver. 17.—**The princes.** These turned aside from the better part they had performed (ch. xxiii. 13, 20). **Made obeisance;** Hebrew, יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ. This is the word that is used of the sheaves of the brethren of Joseph bowing down, according to his dream, to his sheaf; it is also the repeatedly used word of the worship paid to Jehovah the true God, and to idols and false gods. The word occurs nearly two hundred times. The *obeisance* of these princes, therefore, on this occasion lacked nothing of the most pronounced character, and the worst species of flattery gained its disastrous ends. Joash must have been now about thirty-six years of age; he was seven years old when he began to reign, he had reigned twenty-three years before the restoring of the temple (2 Kings xii. 6), and a few years had elapsed since. The words of the princes, to which Joash hearkened, are not supplied by the parallel, which indeed at once proceeds to speak of the threatening attitude of the Syrian king Hazael, and of how Joash bought him off. Our next verse, however, shows to what end those words tended.

Ver. 18.—**Served groves;** Revised Version, *the Asherim*, correctly (see note, ch. xiv. 3). **For this their trespass.** Comparing the emphatic language of ver. 23, "destroyed all the princes of the people *from among the people*," we may conclude that stress is to be laid on the pronoun "their" in the present verse. The worship of the true God was not left by the whole people, and we are not told it was by the king; but (very probably through want of moral courage) he incurred the severest sort of blame, and was without even the excuse of strong personal temptation.

Ver. 19.—**Prophets.** The name of only one, Zechariah, as in next verse, is given (see by the side of this verse the emphatic and touching language of ch. xxxvi. 14—16).

Ver. 20.—**Came upon;** margin, *clothed;* Revised Version margin, *clothed itself with* (1 Chron. xii. 18). Compare the beautiful expression of Rev. i. 10, "I was *in* the Spirit;" it was not merely that the Spirit deigned to visit St. John in Patmos, but so *possessed* him that *he* was in the *Spirit*. **The son of Jehoiada;** *i.e.* very possibly *grandson* of Jehoiada (Jehoiada's great age the rather countenancing this interpretation) and "*son of* Barachias" (Matt. xxiii. 35). **That ye cannot prosper.** The Hebrew text says, "and ye will not prosper." This clause may read all the more forcibly if kept under the dominance of the why of the former, reminding us of such appeals as "Why will ye die?" etc. (ch. xv. 2; Deut. xxviii. throughout). Reading these two clauses in the preterite or present tense will make them neither less forcible nor less correct, so indicating that they, the princes and the nation, were already beginning to eat the fruit of their ways, and "rumours of war," if not war itself, were on them.

Ver. 21.—**Stoned him.** Yet this was their Law's punishment for *themselves*, for idolaters (Lev. xx. 2). **At the commandment of the king.** The king, who had yielded to the flattering obeisance and worship of the princes, is now driven on a grievous length further. **In the court of the house of the Lord.** So Matt. xxiii. 35, "between the temple [Revised Version, 'sanctuary'] and the altar."

Ver. 22.—**Remembered not the kindness** (Gen. xl. 23). **The Lord look upon it, and require it.** So, too, the Revised Version, which also, according to its custom, removes the italic type from the two neuter pronouns "it." But probably a better and correcter rendering is, "The Lord will see and will require" (for it is not necessary to regard this as a prayer of Zechariah); and thus bring it into comparison with those divinest prayers of the Saviour and of St. Stephen. The words on dying Zechariah's lips were perhaps rather the vivid reminiscence of his own well-versed knowledge of the Law, or "the Scriptures" (Gen. ix. 5; xlii. 22). The sentence of the dying priest and prophet in one, is, by the writer of Chronicles at any rate, directed in its fall with fearful straightness to the door of Joash the king himself. Remarkable as is the absence of the matter of this and the five preceding verses from the parallel, it will not escape notice how it is implied in vers. 17, 18 there, while the *inclusion* of it here is again in patent harmony with the great object of the writer.

Ver. 23.—At the end of the year; Hebrew, תְּקוּפַת; margin, both of the Authorized Version and the Revised Version, *revolution*. The word is found three other times, Exod. xxxiv. 22; 1 Sam. i. 20; Ps. xix. 7. The versions, of course, express correctly what is meant, but probably the season of spring is also conveyed (2 Sam. xi. 1; 1 Chron. xx. 1). **The host of Syria.** Their king was Hazael (2 Kings xii. 17), whether actually with them is perhaps not certain, but the last clause in the verse just quoted would seem to convey that impression. He was King of *Damascus* (Aram, or Syria), and having already temporarily mastered Israel (2 Kings xiii. 3, 4, 22), the way was paved to Gath (ch. xi. 8; xvii. 11), whence wistful eyes were bent on Jerusalem, nearly thirty miles distant thence. **Destroyed all the princes of the people**; *i.e.* as in the next verse. **And sent all the spoil.** Whether intended so here or not, probably the strict subject of the verb in this clause is Joash and his counsellors (ver. 18 in parallel), in their fright—and just fright—helpless after the slaughter chronicled in our following verse, bribing off Hazael and his host, as in parallel. The suggestion is most plausible that tidings of Zechariah's martyrdom and of the occasion of it were the very incentive to Hazael's incursion, and an illustration of the "means" by which God works, and by which he wrought his purpose in this instance. **The spoil of them.** If this means only the spoil of the defeated army strictly, then our text gives no trace of the contents of ver. 18 in parallel just alluded to; but the frequent dislocation incident to copied extracts and matter borrowed from original sources, and so often evidenced in the present history, when we have been comparing the two derived accounts to which we are indebted for it, incline us to the above view, as one quite open at any rate to possibility.

Ver. 24.—Came with a small company . . . the Lord delivered a very great host (so Lev. xxvi. 8; Deut. xxviii. 25, etc.). **So they executed judgment against Joash.** The Hebrew says literally, "and on Joash they executed judgments." What the judgments were we do not read, but surely it is probable that they are glanced at in the next verse, "For they left him in great [or, 'many'] diseases," or perhaps "in great illness" (ch. xxi. 15).

Ver. 25.—They left him in great diseases. See note above, and observe further that this parenthetic clause, as treated in both Authorized Version and Revised Version, prepares the way for what follows, and especially for the fact that it was on his bed that they slew him. Render thus, *And after they had betaken themselves away, whereas they left him sorely ill, his own servants conspired . . . and slew him in his bed.* **His own servants.** These had the opportunity the rather at hand, in that he was so ill and in bed. That he died by the conspiring together of a couple of servants, whose foreign and heathen maternity is particularly recorded, was the more ignominious end for him, who had commanded Zechariah to be openly stoned—a death highly honourable in comparison. The parallel (2 Kings xii. 20) adds that it was in "the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla" (for the explanation of which passage, see note *ad loc.*), that the servants' conspiracy to kill Joash took effect. **The sons of Jehoiada.** We know of only one son, Zechariah; there may have been other sons, or other lineal relations of Jehoiada may be covered by the word "sons." We are not obliged to interpret the avenging act of the servants as one to which their own pious and patriotic zeal led them, which, considering their maternal pedigree, is perhaps something unlikely, though of course not impossible, but one to which they were incited by the retributive providence of him who held their hearts also in his hand. In a word, it was a deed done for the blood—*required* (see note and references under ver. 22). **Not in the sepulchres of the kings.** See note on ver. 16, and references there quoted; as also the ambiguous expression of the parallel (ver. 21), "They buried him *with his fathers* in the city of David."

Ver. 26.—Zabad. The name *Jozachar* of the parallel is probably the correct word, and a copyist's corruption may with some plausibility be argued as the cause of the form *Zabad* in our text. The parallel omits the names of the mothers' nationality. **Shimrith.** The parallel has *Shomer*, probably an Hebraized form of the Moabitish name of our text.

Ver. 27.—His sons. We only know of one. Amaziah, his successor. **The burdens laid upon him.** Some explain this expression of the tribute and bribe Joash had to pay Hazael; others of *prophetic* "burdens" uttered against him; and others (much favoured by the position of the clause just before the repairing of the house, etc.) of the task which he had so voluntarily undertaken, the money-raising and all (Ezek. xxiv. 25; comp. our vers. 6, 9, 11). *The repairing;* Hebrew, יְסוֹד. Render, with the Revised Version, *the rebuilding*. **The story of the book of the kings.** The Revised Version renders the Hebrew text (מִדְרַשׁ סֵפֶר) "the commentary of the book of the kings," probably to be followed by the words, "of *Judah*;" the parallel has "the book of the Chronicles [סֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים] of the kings of Judah" (see our Introduction, 1 Chronicles, § 5, pp. vii.—x.). The word rendered "story" or "commentary" in our text is employed only once beside (ch. xiii. 22). Its verbal root, however, is found about a hundred and sixty-two times, invariably in the sense of inquiring, and almost invariably rendered in the Authorized Version by the word "inquire," or "seek;" so that perhaps the word "study" or "pursuit" might, idioms being allowed for, be the nearest rendering. It is rabbinic literature mostly that has determined the preference for the word "commentary."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—27.—*The sad and strange unreliableness of human disposition and life here.* One of the strangest of all the sadnesses of human life is the uncertainty and unreliableness of human disposition, which it is so constantly exposing to view. Not only has the fairest promise vanished (like the sun of many a morning) long before the character could be *supposed* to be firm or even fairly formed, but after the period justly esteemed critical has passed, after fruit has set, and even after some fruit has been gathered ripe, alas for the failures and falls, the disappointments and distressing desolation, which have laid waste the scene! The turn in the life of Joash, with his miserable end, of which this chapter bears record, is a very distinct and typical instance of what has been and is still *often*. And in reading the present chapter, we are forcibly reminded of the apostle's language, "All these things were written for our admonition." We cannot afford to regard the contents of this chapter as of merely historic interest; they are of terrible though kindly import for modern life and all life. In connection with this thought, the following points may be picked out in the matter of the present history. The life which thus in its afternoon, let us say, turned aside to evil, was—

I. ONE WHICH HAD BEEN, IN THE VERY INCEPTION, NURSING, AND FIRST REARING OF IT, ALMOST MIRACULOUSLY SAVED AND GUARDED—THE VERY CREATURE OF PROVIDENCE, THE CHILD OF DIVINE CARE AND WATCHFUL LOVE. Many an analogy really every whit as strong and impressive may be found and instanced by the practical preacher here; also cases which may be well within the knowledge of the parish or the country.

II. ONE THE RIGHT BEGINNING OF WHICH WAS CONSPICUOUS BOTH FOR THE GREATNESS AND THE WORTHINESS OF ITS ZEAL.

III. ONE WHICH HAD ENJOYED THE SUSTAINING HELP OF THE BEST AND MOST FAITHFUL OF FRIENDS. These friends had been of the kind that well remind us of the psalm of Joash's ancestor; for his "father and mother had indeed forsaken him," when "the Lord took him up," in the persons of the priest and his wife. All the incalculable advantages of the best of early associations and religious prepossessions had been the happy portion of Joash, now—when every recollection and reminiscence should have been gilding itself with fresh sacredness—to be flung away to the winds, as though they were presences to the mind as much to be dreaded as in fact they were worthy to be cherished.

IV. ONE THE WRENCH OF WHICH WITH THE PAST WAS SURPRISINGLY VIOLENT AND ABSOLUTE; AND ITS MOTIVE AS SURPRISINGLY UNJUSTIFYING OF IT. This apparently absolute reversal of what had hitherto seemed *character* and *goodness* was above all witnessed to by one central blackest blot in the conduct of Joash. Guiltily did he forget the debt his own very pulse and beating heart owed to the preservers of his life, when he commanded that Zechariah, the son of their love, be stoned to death for his righteous remonstrance and warning. *His* dying words, "The Lord look upon it, and require it," no doubt did not mark the spirit of unforgivingness; they *did* mark, and justly, the turpitude of the sin which was bound to "find out" the perpetrator of it! And then the *motif* of the conduct of Joash! It is written in ver. 17. The brief suppressed language, which *does* there write it, tells the more significantly of its dishonourableness and despicableness, only fit to shun the eye of day! And the warnings of the Lord God of the fathers of Joash and his people, are so touchingly expressed, especially in ver. 19! These preclude the possibility of our deducting anything of blame from Joash, on the ground of his being taken unawares, or surprised by some sudden gust of temptation. This *type* of thing has indeed numbered its *antitypes*, times *without* number; but was it not thus forcibly delineated, deeply graven or etched, that whoso should have eyes to see might see, and ears to hear might hear?

V. One the end of which revealed most fearfully alike the revulsion of man and the solemn retribution of God. With what smitten wonder our awed thought follows unwittingly, but trembles to essay to track the ways of God's *hidden* judgment, when the account of this present life is once summed up,—hidden *because* that account *is* summed up! What solemn need for *every* man to watch and pray; to walk humbly; to take heed how he stands; and to remember the warnings of those of whom *this* is the record, that they "*did* run well"!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Moral weakness.* The extremely interesting circumstances under which Joash came to the throne (ch. xxiii.) make us wish that there was something satisfactory to record of him when he sat upon it. Unfortunately, it is not so. One work in particular he wrought (see next homily) for which he deserves honour, but his character stands before us as that of an essentially weak man. He did what was right all the days of Jehoiada, but no longer. He allowed one man, to whom he was much indebted, to influence him aright; so far he did well. That, however, is not saying very much, for it would have been ingratitude indeed, of the deepest dye, if he had not been guided by those who first saved his life, and then, as the greatest risk to themselves, seated him upon the throne of his fathers. But goodness that goes no deeper than that is essentially weak; the worth that has to be propped up by a human hand, and that falls to the ground when the sustaining hand is withdrawn, is of small account. It has taken no root; it will have no length of life; it will bring forth no flowers and fruits. Moral weakness is—

I. Disregarded of God and man. For such men as Joash the prophet of the Lord has no word of general commendation, though he has words of rebuke to utter (vers. 19, 20). With them God "is not well pleased." And man is also and equally dissatisfied. Men that are wrong and strong will find their advocates; indeed, they find all too many to honour and praise them, both while they live and when they are departed. But men that are good and weak find none to admire them. They may start, as Joash apparently did, with fair intentions and blameless desires, but they have no force of character, and being "driven with the wind and tossed," carried about hither and thither according to the passing breeze, they are the object of disregard, if not of positive contempt. There is nothing honourable or admirable in them.

II. Fruitless of any positive good. Such men as Joash may do some good during one half of their life, or at different parts of their life; but the good they then do is counterbalanced by the harm they work during the other half or on other occasions; and no one can say which prevails over the other. The measure of many a man's life influence is a nice sum in spiritual subtraction; and when everything is known it will perhaps be found to be a "negative quantity." It is a poor and a pitiful thing to see a man first building up and then pulling down; one day working with the people of God and the next associating with the enemies of true and pure religion; subscribing to a Christian charity and attending a demoralizing spectacle; pulling in contrary directions. What can such a man *do?* What witness can he bear, what work achieve, what contribution bring to the great end we should have in view—the elevation of our kind? *That* will be represented by a cypher—or something worse.

III. Unnecessary. It may indeed be said that this is a question of natural endowment, and rests with our Creator and not with ourselves; that men receive from him either strength and force of will or else pliancy of spirit, sensitiveness of soul and readiness to be affected by influences from outside. This is true, in part; but it is not the whole truth. We must not make our heavenly Father responsible for our shortcomings. Moral weakness is a *defect of character*. It is the result of a wrong choice. 1. Let a man *give himself*, as he should, *in full surrender* to the God whose he is and whom he is most sacredly bound to serve, to that Divine Saviour who has bought him with the price of his own redeeming blood, and he will then be in the way of gaining single-heartedness and strength. 2. Let him be *regularly* and *repeatedly renewing* his act of self-dedication. Joash *did*, when he was a child, pledge himself to the service of Jehovah (ch. xxiii. 16). But he was then too young to understand all that such a covenant meant. He should have continually renewed that solemn pledge. We have the amplest opportunities and invitations to reconsecrate ourselves to the service of Christ, and if we accept these, we shall retain our thorough loyalty to him, and then we shall not be moved and swayed, but be "steadfast and immovable." 3. Let him *gain strength from above*. There is an unfailing Divine resource on which all the good may draw. "When I am weak, then am I strong," said Paul. For when he was most conscious of his own insufficiency, then he looked up for help to the "Lord of all power and might," to him who can and will "strengthen us with strength in our soul," who will "strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man," who will make us strong (1) to endure; (2) to overcome; (3) to bear witness; (4) to labour in the holy fields of Christian work.—C.

Vers. 4—14.—*Church renovation.* We have an interesting description of a very old instance of—

I. CHURCH RENOVATION. Here were all the elements that ordinarily occur. 1. *Dilapidation*, or the condition of being out of repair. In this case there had been profanation, deliberate injury, spoliation (ver. 7); but always there will be waste and decay even in "the house of the Lord." The elements of nature do not spare the most sacred sanctuary. 2. *An energetic leader.* Joash signalized his otherwise ordinary career by taking this matter much to heart and taking it thoroughly in hand. He prompted Jehoiada himself; he incited the hesitating priests (vers. 5—9); he called forth the energy of the people themselves. 3. *Co-operation.* "All the princes and all the people rejoiced" when they were zealously engaged in the work, and the masons and the carpenters did their part regularly and faithfully (2 Kings xii. 15). 4. *Liberality.* When the chest was made the people responded freely; they all "cast into it until they made an end," until there was "much money," "money in abundance." When an appeal is made to the spontaneous liberality of Christian men, in a cause that is recognized to be good, there is usually a response. If under the Law there was this readiness to give, how much more should there be such forwardness and consecration of substance under the *more constraining influences* and for the *far higher privileges* of the gospel of Jesus Christ! 5. *Perseverance* under discouragement. The king charged the priests and Levites to "hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not" (ver. 5). But the enthusiastic king was not to be daunted; he would not let this slackness on the part of those who should have been eager and diligent constitute any serious stumbling-block. He used his ingenuity to devise other and more effective measures, and his determination prevailed, as it will prevail. If we allow a good work to be dropped because some of our coadjutors are found wanting, we shall do but little. A holy perseverance under discouragement is the condition of success. As with the leaders, so with those that follow; the workmen must patiently continue until the work is perfected. Then comes the crowning circumstance, viz.: 6. *The use of the building* for the worship of God (ver. 14). We pass on to that which is far more important—

II. THE RENOVATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CAUSE. 1. It may be that the cause of Christ is quite "out of repair." Some "sons of Athaliah" have come in and done devastating work. Where there was all that satisfied the observant eye of the Divine Lord, there is now a sad decline and decay; there is feebleness where there should be strength, barrenness where there used to be fruitfulness, poverty and paucity where there once was fulness. There are unsightly and blameworthy breaches in the walls. Then there arises in some heart: 2. A strong, compelling eagerness to repair. First it fills one heart, then it is communicated to another and another; finally it moves "all the people," and they resolve that the flagging cause of Christ shall be revived. 3. Then they give themselves to (1) penitence for past neglect; (2) prayer for Divine inspiration and guidance; (3) solemn renewal of first vows of dedication; (4) active and energetic work. 4. Their reconsecration is crowned with sacred joy, and with a happy restoration to the end for which they were called into existence (ver. 14). All this is based upon—

III. THE RENEWAL OF THE INDIVIDUAL HEART. For if the cause of Christ has declined, it is because the spiritual life of the individual men has been languishing. There has been a cooling of love, a lessening of faith, an abatement of zeal, a lack of devotion. What is needed is: 1. A sense of departure and loss. 2. A humbling of the heart before God. 3. A reconsecration of heart and life to the Redeemer. 4. A patient continuance in well-doing.—C.

Vers. 15, 16.—*A noble character and a useful life.* These are two things which are not always closely associated, though they are very frequently found together; they certainly were thus united in the person and experience of Jehoiada. In him we have—

I. A NOBLE CHARACTER. And this: 1. *Was based upon true piety.* Jehoiada was the man he was because he was a faithful servant of Jehovah. He was rich "toward God." His mind and heart were turned toward him, to worship in his house, to study and to do his will, to promote his glory. Everything else that was good in him rested on his religious conviction and practice as on a sure foundation; every other virtue took its root and found its source and spring in that. 2. *Acquired great strength.* By the exercise and cultivation of his piety and moral worth, by his confidence in God, and by all that he daily gained from God in response to his devotion, he acquired great force of goodness. He was a man that "seemed to be a pillar," and who was such; a strong stay, which no antagonism could remove, no treachery undermine. He "stood four-square to all the winds that blew." Men felt that in him they would find a determined and powerful enemy to whatever evil thing they might propose. 3. *Shone forth in unselfish service.* He fearlessly and nobly risked everything in order to rid his country of a vile usurper, and place upon the throne one that would rule in righteousness. And though he certainly lent all the weight of his influence to the support of the sovereign, he does not appear to have arrogated any undue authority (see ver. 6). He was actuated by a pure, magnanimous devotion to the highest interests of his country. So he lived—

II. A USEFUL LIFE. 1. He effected a most desirable and salutary revolution; overturning a dynasty that had no right to the throne, and restoring the family of David; exchanging an idolatrous ruler for one that reigned in the fear of God. 2. He solemnly pledged the people to the service of Jehovah, and arranged for systematic services in his temple (ch. xxiii. 16—18). 3. He sustained the hand of Joash in his work of repairing the temple. This we might assume, but this the words of the text, "toward his house," clearly indicate. 4. He did much (as the following verses show) to maintain the worship of God in the land, against all reactionary influences, whether at court or among the princes or the people. He "did good to Israel" indeed. If we except the judges and kings as those whose official positions gave them quite exceptional opportunities, we may safely say that there are not more than three or four men who rendered such distinguished service to their country as Jehoiada the priest. He was well worthy, when he died in an honoured old age, to be "buried among the kings." Probably few kinglier men than he have been "gathered to their fathers."

We learn: 1. That honour rests upon faithful service, on true usefulness—such honour as is worth possessing. 2. That usefulness is the product of excellency of character. Men may be eloquent, ambitious, capable, endowed with large administrative abilities, but if they are not unselfish, if they do not know how to subordinate their own aims and interests to the public weal, they are as likely to be harmful as helpful in their course. Only solid worth of character, rectitude allied with patriotism and philanthropy, is any security for substantial usefulness. 3. That character is only sound when it is sacred; that it is only the man who reveres God, and who places himself and his life under Divine guidance, on whom we can thoroughly rely. All other defences and inspirations fail. "The fear of God" of which the devout Israelite spoke, the love and service of Jesus Christ of which we speak,—this is the rock on which to build a noble character and a useful life.—C.

Vers. 17—25.—*Sad successive stages.* With the seventeenth verse of this chapter there commences a very painful record. From one who had been so mercifully spared, so admirably trained, so bountifully blessed, as was King Joash, much better things might have been expected. It is the melancholy story of rapid degeneracy, and a miserable and dishonourable end.

I. DEPARTURE FROM THE LIVING GOD. Not being "rooted and grounded" in reverence and in attachment to Jehovah, as soon as the directing and sustaining hand of Jehoiada was missed, Joash gave heed to the evil counsel of the reactionary "princes of Judah" and "left the house of the Lord." The young may be habituated to sacred services, and they may be brought up in the practice of good behaviour, but if they have not fully and firmly attached themselves to the Divine Lord whose praises they have been singing and whose will they have been respecting, their piety will not endure. "Being let go," being released, as they must be in time, from the human restraints that hold them to the right course, they follow the bent of worldly inclination; it may be that they yield to the solicitation of unholy passion; but they decline from the path of Christian worship and godly service. It is a melancholy sight for the angels of God, and for all earnest human souls, to witness—that of a man who knows what is best, who has stood face to face with Christ, who has often worshipped in his house, and perhaps sat at his table, declining to lower paths, "going after Baal," letting another power than that of his gracious Lord rule his heart and occupy his life.

II. RESENTMENT AT THE DIVINE REBUKE. The true and honoured servant of the Lord, Jehoiada, was well succeeded by a faithful son, Zechariah. He did his work right nobly, and testified against the apostasy of the king and court. But the monarch, in the haughtiness of his heart, resented the rebuke of the Lord's prophet, and only aggravated his offence by persecution and even murder (vers. 20, 21). Thus sin slopes down, and at some points with sad and startling rapidity. When God's rebuke is heard, coming through the voice of one of his ministers, or coming in his Divine providence; and when that rebuke, instead of being heeded and obeyed, is resented by the rebellious spirit, then there ensues a very rapid spiritual decline. Men go "from bad to worse," from indifference or forgetfulness to hostility, from doubt to disbelief, from laxity to licentiousness, from wrongness of attitude to iniquity in action. To resent the rebuke of the Lord is to inflict upon ourselves the most serious, and too often a mortal, injury.

III. THE PENALTY OF DISOBEDIENCE. In the case of Joash, it was: 1. Humiliating defeat in battle (vers. 23, 24). 2. Bodily sufferings (ver. 25). 3. A violent and miserable death (ver. 25). 4. Dishonour after death (ver. 25). In the case of the spiritual transgressor now, the penalty that has to be feared is: 1. Grave and grievous spiritual decline. 2. The serious displeasure of the Divine Master. 3. The loss of the esteem of the truest and best human friends. 4. Condemnation in the day of judgment.—C.

Vers. 1—3.—*The early years of Joash.* I. HIS PARENTAGE. 1. *His father.* Jehoahaz, Ahaziah, or Azariah (ch. xxi. 17; ch. xxii. 1, 6), Jehoram's youngest son, who ascended the throne on his father's death, reigned one year, was slain by Jehu (ch. xxii. 9), and buried in Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David, because, though himself bad, he was a good man's son (ch. xxii. 9). 2. *His mother.* Zibiah of Beersheba, concerning whom nothing is known. Perhaps beautiful, as her name "Gazelle" may suggest; considering who her husband was, it will not be safe to say she was good, though the place she came from once had an aroma of piety about it (Gen. xxi. 33).

II. HIS REIGN. 1. *Early begun.* When seven years old. Such early promotion would not have been safe for the kingdom (Eccles. x. 16) or good for himself had Jehoiada not been beside him as counsellor of his inexperience, and, in fact, as virtual ruler. 2. *Long continued.* Forty years. Shorter by fifteen than that of Manasseh (ch. xxxiii. 1), his occupation of the throne was only one year shorter than that of Asa (ch. xvi. 13), and as long as that of Solomon (ch. ix. 30).

III. HIS CHARACTER. 1. *Promising.* "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." But: 2. *Imperfect.* "The high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places" (2 Kings xii. 3). And: 3. *Unstable.* He behaved well only so long as Jehoiada lived to counsel, and perhaps restrain, him.

IV. HIS MARRIAGES. "Jehoiada took for him two wives," one of whom was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem (ch. xxv. 1). Perhaps: 1. *Good policy*, to ensure a succession to the throne. But: 2. *Bad morality*, and against the Law of God, though recommended by a pious priest, and sanctioned by the example of godly kings. Joash's subsequent declension may have been in part due to this.

Learn: 1. That early greatness is not always accompanied by early goodness. 2. That many begin to run well in youth who nevertheless decline in after-years. 3. That religious education is not sufficient in itself to overcome the force of inbred corruption. 4. That permanence is an indispensable quality in all moral and spiritual excellence. 5. That all the opinions of a good man are not necessarily good. 6. That good men sometimes occasion sin in others.—W.

Vers. 4—11.—*A good intention well carried out.* I. THE CONTEMPLATED WORK. 1. *The reparation of the house of the Lord.* (1) What this signified. The reconstruction, not of the whole but of such parts of the temple walls and edifices as had been overturned and destroyed. A project both becoming and right—becoming that Jehovah's house should be restored to its pristine completeness and beauty (1 Chron. xxii. 3); right, inasmuch as on Judah had been devolved the duty of protecting and preserving it (ch. vii. 16—22). In the same way is it proper for, and incumbent on, believers to have regard to the strength and beauty, symmetry and adornment, not merely of the material edifices, but also and chiefly of the spiritual temples of the Christian Church. (2) Why this was needed. On account, not of the ravages of time upon its massive masonry, but of the demolition it had suffered at the hands of Athaliah (and Jehoram) in order to construct the temple of Baal, whose walls and pillars, altars and images, had just been broken in pieces by the revolutionaries of Judah (ch. xxiii. 17). So by false systems of religion, as well as by systems of no religion, have breaches sometimes been made in the Christian Church—adherents seduced from the faith, doctrines obscured, perverted, or rendered inoperative—which demand the utmost efforts of Christians to repair, even after the false systems, like Baal's temple, have been shattered to pieces. (3) By whom this was projected. By Joash, who, even if not impelled by higher motives, certainly had reason to remember the house in which his infant years had been sheltered, and himself when a boy had received his crown. If Joash moved in this matter of his own accord, the fact spoke well for his goodness; if even he required to be urged to it by Jehoiada—which is not stated—the fact that he listened to the priest attested the reverence he possessed for Jehovah's servant. The pity was that neither his goodness nor his reverence were deeply rooted or permanent. (4) When this was moved. "After this," an indefinite note of time which might mean either after the revolution or after Joash's marriages. If the former, which is doubtful, the king evinced praiseworthy alacrity—if his business demanded haste (ver. 5), much more did God's (ch. xv. 15; xxxi. 21; Eccles. ix. 10; Rom. xii. 11); if the latter, his dilatoriness was not without blame (Matt. vi. 33). 2. *The replacement of the dedicated things* which had been bestowed upon the Baalim (ver. 7). Not the dedicated things Solomon had brought into the temple (ch. v. 1); the spoil, in articles of gold and silver, David had taken from his enemies (1 Kings vii. 51), since these had been pillaged and carried off by Shishak (ch. xii. 9); probably the silver, gold, and vessels dedicated by Abijah, Asa (ch. xv. 18), and Jehoshaphat (2 Kings xii. 18); the spoil taken by the first from Jeroboam (ch. xiii. 16), by the second from the Cushites (ch. xiv. 12), and by the third from the Ammonites (ch. xxi. 25).

II. WAYS AND MEANS. Two plans for obtaining the money requisite for the undertaking. 1. *The plan that failed.* (1) What it was. That the priests and Levites should in all the cities of Judah raise a contribution to repair the house of God (ver. 5); that the amount levied from each man should be "the tax of Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tent of the testimony" (ver. 6); and that this should be done annually (ver. 5). In 2 Kings (xii. 4) the money is defined as of three sorts (Keil): (*a*) The "money of the numbered," or, "of every one that passeth the numbering," *i.e.* the poll tax of half a shekel required of every Israelite as a ransom for his soul (Exod. xxx. 12—16); (*b*) the "money of the persons for whom each man is rated," *i.e.* the sums arising from the redemption of devoted persons (Lev. xxvii. 1—8); and (*c*) "the money that it cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord," *i.e.* the free-will offerings of the people. According to another interpretation (Bähr), only the two last sorts were intended, and the phrase, "money of the numbered," should be rendered "in current money" (Revised Version)—the reason for this instruction that the contributions should be in current money being, it is said, that the money "was to be paid out at once to mechanics for their labour" (Thenius). (2) Why it failed. Not because the priests embezzled the money (J. D. Michaelis, De Wette), which is not stated, and should not be suggested (Ps. cxl. 3; Titus iii. 2), but probably because of (*a*) their dilatoriness in setting about the work entrusted to them—that the work should have been entrusted to them was the first mistake in the proposed plan; (*b*) the difficulty they had in gathering in the money, which from the manner of its levying had the appearance of a compulsory payment—this the second mistake in the proposed plan; and (*c*) the too lavish expenditure demanded by their own personal necessities (a legitimate charge upon the collected funds), leaving too small a balance for the work of temple-repairing—that the priests should have been left to distribute the taxes and offerings of the people between their own needs and the public requirements was the third mistake in the proposed plan.

"If self the wavering balance shake,
It's rarely right adjusted."
(Burns.)

The result was that in the three and twentieth year of Joash—the year of a new reign in Israel (2 Kings xiii. 1)—the priests had done little or nothing in the way of repairing the breaches of the temple (2 Kings xii. 6). 2. *The plan that succeeded.* (1) The details of the new plan. According to 2 Kings, the work of collecting money for themselves, the temple worship, and the repair of the building was no more to be entrusted to their hands, neither were these three items of expense to be in future defrayed out of a common fund; but the trespass-money and sin-money should be assigned to the priests for the first two of these purposes, as the Law of Moses prescribed (Lev. v. 16; Numb. v. 8), while the taxes and the free-will offerings should be devoted to the third (2 Kings xii. 7—16). According to the Chronicler, whose statements are supported by those of the Book of Kings, by Joash's command a chest or collection-box of wood was made with a hole bored in its lid, and placed "without at the gate of the house of the Lord," *i.e.* in the outer court "beside the altar as one cometh into the house of the Lord" (2 Kings xii. 9). Next a proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem that the people should themselves, of their own free will and pleasure, bring in the temple rates prescribed by the Law, and the free-will offerings to which they were impelled by their own hearts, and deposit these, unseen by any eye but Jehovah's, into the box. Again, it was arranged that, as often as the chest or box was full, it should be conveyed by the hands of the Levites into the king's office, where the money should be emptied out by or before the king's secretary and the high priest's assistant, who should put it into bags, weigh it and hand it over to them "that did the service of the house of the Lord," after which the chest should be carried back again to its place at the temple gate. (2) The recommendations of the new plan. It avoided the mistakes of the first scheme. It put the work into the hands of a board of oversight better fitted to command the confidence of the community. It avoided the irritating weapon of compulsion, and relied upon the free will of the people, even with regard to the levying of taxes. It simplified the financial arrangements by keeping the money given for the temple separate from that paid to the priests. (3) The success of the new plan. The people entered into it as their forefathers had done when invited to contribute towards the building of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxv. 21, etc.), universally—"all the princes and all the people cast into the chest;" cheerfully, with no sense of constraint or compulsion upon them—"they rejoiced;" liberally—money was "gathered in abundance;" unweariedly—not once or twice merely, but regularly and constantly they went on with their collecting "until they had made an end," *i.e.* of the enterprise they had in hand, the repairing of the temple. N.B.—The above principles should regulate Christian giving, which should be universal—"every one of you" (1 Cor. xvi. 2); cheerful—"God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7); liberal—"see that ye abound in this grace [of liberality] also" (2 Cor. viii. 7); constant—"to do good and to communicate forget not" (Heb. xiii. 16).

III. THE WORK EXECUTED. From the money thus collected: 1. *The cost of materials was defrayed.* "Timber and hewn stone," at least, had to be bought (2 Kings xii. 12). 2. *The wages of workmen were paid.* Masons, carpenters, and workers in iron and brass were hired. 3. *The necessary vessels were constructed.* The surplus money, after meeting the above charges, was devoted to the manufacture of gold and silver utensils for the temple service. "So the workmen wrought," etc. (ver. 13).

Learn: 1. The duty of Christian giving, which may be inferred, *à fortiori*, from this example of the Hebrew Church. 2. The superiority of the voluntary over the compulsory system of raising money for religious purposes, even should the latter be deemed permissible. 3. The propriety of financial boards, especially those connected with the Church, being above suspicion. 4. The wisdom of aiming at simplicity in schemes for receiving the contributions of the faithful. 5. The advantage of adopting such measures as shall place Church-treasurers beyond the reach of temptation.—W.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The life, death, burial, and epitaph of a great man.* I. JEHOIADA'S LIFE. 1. *Pious;* i.e. (1) Good. No man really pious who is not inwardly good. (2) Sincere. As a priest of Jehovah, he was under solemn covenant to lead a holy life. (3) Courageous. It required no small heroism to stand forth as a servant of Jehovah in the days of Ahaziah and Athaliah. 2. *Useful.* "We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths," etc. (Bailey). Jehoiada's life was spent, not in indolence, but activity; this activity was directed, not by personal ambitions, but by considerations of public advantage, and ceased not until the close of his life. Besides discharging the multifarious duties devolving upon him as high priest of the nation, he practically became the nation's leader during the times of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah; the nation's saviour, effecting the overthrow of Athaliah, the preservation of Joash, and in him the continuance of David's throne; and the nation's ruler, acting as regent during Joash's minority, and as prime minister of Joash until the end came. In particular, to him the nation owed the preservation of its king, its throne, its religion, its temple. 3. *Long.* Nevertheless, the end came, though long delayed. He died "full of days," satisfied with living, like Abraham (Gen. xxv. 8), Isaac (Gen. xxxv. 29), David (1 Chron. xxiii. 1), and Job (xlii. 17), an old man of a hundred and thirty years, the longest recorded life of any Hebrew, the patriarchs excepted. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" etc. (Ps. xxxiv. 12—14).

II. JEHOIADA'S DEATH. 1. *To himself a gain.* (Phil. i. 21.) (1) A blessed repose after life's labours (Isa. lvii. 2; Dan. xii. 13; 2 Thess. i. 7; Rev. xiv. 13). "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well" ('Macbeth,' act iii. sc. 2). (2) A splendid exchange for time's vanities: "length of days for ever and ever" (Ps. xxi. 4; xxxvii. 18; John x. 28; Heb. xi. 10, 16; 1 Pet. i. 4; Rev. ii. 10). (3) A magnificent reward for earth's services (Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15; Prov. iii. 35; John xii. 26; Rom. ii. 7; Rev. ii. 7, 17, 26). 2. *To Joash a loss.* (2 Kings ii. 3.) Jehoiada's death the removal of (1) the saviour of his infancy; (2) the teacher of his boyhood; (3) the counsellor of his manhood. Whether Joash recognized the greatness of his loss may be doubtful. The notion that he felt the decease of the grey-haired priest as something of a relief is not without countenance. 3. *To the nation a calamity.* (2 Sam. iii. 38.) Born to be a king, Joash wanted the capacity to rule. The fittest man to have sat upon the throne was Jehoiada. Only Divine providence does not always assign men the posts for which they are best qualified. The incompetency of Joash would have earlier proved a curse to Judah had the statesman-priest not been at his elbow. So long as Jehoiada kept his hand upon the helm, the ship of state sailed over stormiest seas with safety; when death compelled his grasp to relax, the vessel's rocking amid the tumbling waves showed how capable a pilot he had been.

III. JEHOIADA'S BURIAL. 1. *National.* The people paid him public obsequies. Not the king alone, but the entire realm lamented him, and joined in the sad ceremonial of consigning his lifeless body to the tomb. Public funerals are often gigantic hypocrisies. Not of such sort was this of the great priest of Jerusalem. 2. *Royal.* The grandeur of his obsequies equalled that lavished on the funerals of kings. Of some kings, among whom Joash must be numbered (ver. 25), it is recorded that the people declined to honour them with royal burial (ch. xxi. 19, 20; xxvi. 23; xxviii. 27); of Jehoiada, though not a king, except in nobility of soul, it is written, his people "buried him in the city of David among the kings"—as it were recognizing in him a sovereign greater than many, and equal to the best.

IV. JEHOIADA'S EPITAPH. 1. *Short.* One sentence of three clauses: "He did good in Israel, both toward God, and towards his house." Nothing more offensive to good taste and refined feeling, not to say more untrue to fact, than the fulsome and extravagant paragraphs which often appear on tombstones. 2. *Simple.* All who read might understand, and, understanding, might verify from their own experience, assisted (if need were) by the recollections of others. The last place at which to make a display of eloquence and rhetoric is the grave's mouth. What is here recorded of this uncrowned King of Judah stands in startling contrast with the magniloquence of Egyptian and Assyrian kings. 3. *Sufficient.* What more or better could be testified of any man than that in his lifetime he had done good, lived a life of piety towards God and of philanthropy towards man, promoted God's glory and advanced man's good, furthered God's kingdom and increased man's happiness?

Learn: 1. The possibility of combining statesmanship and piety. 2. The commanding influence of religion when associated with talent and rank. 3. The advisability of looking beyond man in both Church and state, since statesmen and priests are not suffered to continue by reason of death. 4. The certainty that a life of philanthropy and piety will sooner or later find recognition. 5. The fitness of rewarding with becoming honour in death those who sincerely and successfully serve their generation when in life.—W.

Vers. 17—22.—*The downward career of a king.* I. JOASH'S TEMPTATION. (Ver. 17.) 1. *When it came.* "After Jehoiada's death," when the weakling king, having lost his counsellor, was left to the guidance of his own vain heart and foolish understanding. Temptations mostly assail men in their moments of weakness. Eve was probably assaulted in the absence of Adam (Gen. iii. 1); David, certainly, in the absence of Nathan (2 Sam. xi. 2); Job, when enfeebled through affliction (ii. 9); Peter, when deprived of strength through over-confidence (John xiii. 27). The devil is too wary a warrior to besiege a heart when at its strongest. 2. *How it looked.* (1) Extremely pleasing; flattering to his vanity and satisfying to his pride. "The princes of Judah came, and made obeisance to him." (2) Perfectly harmless. What they asked may be assumed to have been liberty to worship the Asherim and the idols (ver. 18); not that the king should do so, though secretly they may have hoped he would, but merely that toleration should be granted to them. Tempters seldom show all their hands at once; if they did, their temptations would fail (Prov. i. 17). To the tempted also evil courses commonly appear safe when first embarked upon; though afterwards their true characters are discovered, when too late. 3. *How it fared.* It prospered. Joash, poor fool! swallowed the bait. "He hearkened unto them," because either he wanted courage to refuse, or desired, in return for their flattery, to please them (Dan. xi. 32).

II. JUDAH'S DECLENSION. (Ver. 18.) 1. *The princes.* These "left the house of the Lord God of their fathers," *i.e.* abandoned the worship of Jehovah, of which the temple was the centre, and embraced the abominable superstitions of the northern kingdom and of the preceding reigns in Judah. On the worship of the Asherim and idols, see ch. xiv. 3 (homily). 2. *The people.* The language of the Chronicler (ver. 18), as well as of Zechariah (ver. 20), implies that Judah and Jerusalem, in their people as well as princes, had transgressed; and, indeed, it is hardly likely that the princes would have ventured upon this step had they not been able to count upon the sympathy, if not the direct support, of the community. 3. *The king.* Though "not stated that Joash himself worshipped idols" (Bertheau), and though, perhaps, at first he did not, it is too apparent, from the moral deterioration he suffered, as well as from the judgment he endured, that his offence was more than "not strictly maintaining the worship of Jehovah" (Bertheau).

III. JEHOVAH'S CORRECTION. (Ver. 19.) 1. *Its instruments.* The prophets; in particular, Zechariah the son—perhaps grandson (Eadie, Ebrard, Lange, Morison)—of Jehoiada (ver. 20), called also Barachias (Matt. xxiii. 35). The prophets, of whom many have appeared in this book—Nathan (ch. ix. 29), Ahijah (ch. x. 15), Azariah (ch. xv. 1). Hanani (ch. xvi. 7), Micaiah (ch. xviii. 8), Jehu (ch. xix. 2), Jahaziel (ch.

xx. 14), Elijah (xxi. 12)—were the recognized medium of communication between God and the people. The prophets at this time sent to testify for Jehovah against the people are not named, with one exception; which may suggest that one may be an honoured, true, and faithful servant of God in Church or state, and may render important services to both without having his name chronicled on the registers of time. 2. *Its tenor.* A testimony against the nation, in terms similar to those of Zechariah. Their idol-worship was: (1) A direct transgression of Jehovah's commandments (Exod. xx. 3—5, 23; xxiii. 13; Lev. xxvi. 1, 30; Deut. iv. 15—19; xxvii. 15). (2) An express violation of the covenant into which they had entered with Jehovah (ch. xxiii. 16). (3) A fatal obstacle to their prosperity, whether national or individual (Numb. xiv. 41; Deut. xxviii. 29; Ps. i. 3, 4; xvi. 4; xcvii. 7; Jonah ii. 8). (4) A sure sign of their abandonment by God (ch. xii. 5; xv. 2; Deut. xxxi. 16, 17; Josh. xxiv. 20; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9). 3. *Its reception.* "They would not give ear." Unwilling to obey, they would not listen. The truth was unpalatable, and hence they rejected it. They loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil (John iii. 19); they hated the truth, because it condemned them (Ps. l. 17; Amos v. 10).

IV. ZECHARIAH'S ASSASSINATION. (Ver. 20.) A deed of: 1. *Atrocious inhumanity.* Murdered by his countrymen, the princes of Judah, in some sort his near kinsmen, considering that he himself was a collateral descendant of the royal line, his mother having been Ahaziah's sister (ch. xxii. 11). 2. *Revolting cruelty.* Stoned with stones. Lapidation, a peculiarly Jewish form of punishment, is described in the Mishna. "The condemned, if a man, was led naked to the place of torture, but a woman was allowed to retain her clothes. The offender was always taken out of the city. . . . All that was necessary was that the place should be in a valley, or foss, with steep banks, from the top of which one of the witnesses threw the accused down. If he falls on his back and is killed, well and good; if not, another witness throws a stone on his chest. The first stones were cast at the head, so as to hasten death and shorten the sufferings of the victim. There were no regular executioners. In the time of the kings, the sovereigns appointed men to carry out the sentence" (Stapfer, 'Palestine in the Time of Christ,' pp. 112, 113; cf. Keil's 'Archäologie,' § 153). This terrible mode of executing capital punishment the Law reserved for aggravated offences (Lev. xx. 2, 27; xxiv. 14; Numb. xv. 35), in particular for practising and enticing to idolatry (Deut. xiii. 10; xviii. 5). Victims of stoning were, in Old Testament times, Achan (Josh vii. 25), Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 13), Hadoram (ch. x. 18), Zechariah; in New Testament times, Stephen (Acts vii. 58), Paul (Acts xiv. 19), and (perhaps) Antipas (Rev. ii. 13). 3. *Gross profanity.* Murdered in the court of Jehovah's house, "between the sanctuary and the altar" (Matt. xxiii. 35), always regarded as an aggravation of the original crime (Lam. ii. 10), and a special form of defilement (Ezek. ix. 7). Jehoiada would not shed there the blood of Joash's grandmother (ch. xxiii. 14); Joash did not hesitate to spill there the blood of Jehoiada's son. 4. *Horrible impiety.* Murdered, although a prophet of Jehovah (1 Kings xix. 10); murdered, because he told them the truth (cf. John viii. 40); murdered by men themselves guilty of death and deserving to be stoned (see above); murdered in Jehovah's house and before his altar, in defiance of his Law and contempt for his religion. 5. *Monstrous ingratitude.* Murdered "at the king's commandment;" done to death by a man to whom his father (or grandfather) had given life, education, a crown, a kingdom, a reformed religion, a settled country (ch. xxii. 11—xxiii. 21). The vocabulary of vituperation has been exhausted to set forth the wickedness, odiousness, and loathsomeness of this vice. It has been likened to "a sharp-toothed vulture," "a marble-hearted fiend, more hideous than the sea-monster;" it has been spoken of as "the most detestable act" a person can commit, a vice more abominable "than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness;" a monster whose tooth is keener than the winter wind. Nor is it too much to say that, amongst this hideous crew of God-forsaken wretches, Joash stands pre-eminent. A creature as mean and despicable the earth surely is seldom called on to support and nourish. 6. *Unavoidable avengement.* Zechariah himself, feeling this, ere his eyes closed and his lips became silent in death, uttered a prayer or invocation, "The Lord look upon it, and require it," in reality a prediction which soon became a history. Contrast the prayer of Stephen for his murderers (Acts vii. 60). Zechariah the murdered prophet, and Stephen the martyred deacon, each embodied and illustrated the spirit of the dispensation under which he lived; that under which Zechariah lived, a dispensation (1) of law and penalty, (2) of wrath and condemnation; that under which Stephen flourished, a dispensation (1) of grace and mercy, and (2) of forgiveness and justification (2 Cor. iii. 7—11).

Lessons. 1. The danger of listening to flattery; it makes men, even kings, foolish. 2. The duty of resisting the first approaches of temptation. *Obsta principiis.* 3. The downward course of sin—*Facilis descensus Averno* (Virgil, 'Æneid,' vi. 126). 4. The folly of forsaking God; it can only end in being forsaken by God. 5. The courage needed to be a true servant of God in any age. He who would speak for God will often require to speak against man. 6. The surest evidence of original and innate depravity is the fact that men do not naturally care for, but rather dislike, and are averse to, God's Word. 7. The certainty that they who will live godly must suffer persecution. God's witnesses are often slain (Rev. xi. 7). 8. The baseness of ingratitude towards God; inferred from that of ingratitude towards man. 9. The contrast between the Law and the gospel; illustrated by Zechariah's imprecation and Stephen's invocation. 10. The certainty of Divine retribution: God will avenge his saints (Luke xviii. 7, 8).—W.

Vers. 23—27.—*Divine retributions; or, the predictions and prayers of a dying man coming true.* I. Judah invaded by the Syrians. (Ver. 23.) Zechariah had predicted that prosperity should no longer attend Judah in consequence of her apostasy from Jehovah (ver. 20); and, before breathing his last, had prayed, and so practically predicted (Jas. v. 16), that Jehovah would avenge his murder upon the king, his princes, and people (ver. 22). That this incursion of Hazael (1 Kings xix. 15), who had first assassinated Benhadad II. and seized upon the throne (2 Kings viii. 7—15), and whose historicity is guaranteed by an inscription on Shalmaneser's black obelisk, which says, "In my eighteenth year, for the sixteenth time the Euphrates I crossed. Hazael of Damascus to battle came. . . . In my twenty-first campaign, to the cities of Hazael of Damascus I went. Four of his fortresses I took" ('Records,' etc., v. 34, 35; Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 206)—that this incursion of the Syrian monarch into Judæan territory, as far even as to Jerusalem, was an instalment of the wrath which the nation's apostasy had stirred up against itself, several things convinced the Chronicler. 1. *The time when it happened.* "At the end," or revolution, "of the year." No doubt Divine judgment often tarries, and when it does men are apt to question its existence (Ps. l. 20). But sometimes it hastens on the heels of crime, as it did in the cases of Cain (Gen. iv. 8, 9), Pharaoh (Exod. xiv. 27), Israel in Shittim (Numb. xxv. 4), the murderers of Ishbosheth (2 Sam. iv. 12), Ahab (1 Kings xxii. 34—37), Haman (Esth. vii. 10), Judas (Acts i. 18; Matt. xxvii. 5), and others; and their observers instinctively exclaim, "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. lviii. 11). 2. *The success it attained.* (1) The Syrian army, having probably conquered Israel, succeeded in capturing Gath, one of the five cities of the Philistines (Josh. xiii. 3), which David annexed to Judah (1 Chron. xviii. 1), and which may still have belonged to the kingdom of Joash. (2) Next it moved upon Jerusalem, which was not far distant, and defeated the Judæan troops in a pitched battle, in which all the princes of Judah were cut off, and Joash himself seriously wounded. (3) As an inducement to make peace and withdraw his forces from the capital, Hazael obtained from Joash "all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated," which had been recovered from the temple of Baal (ver. 7), "and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord and in the king's house" (2 Kings xii. 18). (4) That which specially revealed the hand of God in this disaster was not so much the extent as the incidence of it. The blow descended, indeed, upon the common people, who are chief sufferers in most wars; but in this instance a striking fitness was visible in the cutting off of the princes who had instigated the sovereign and his subjects to idolatry, and in the despoliation of the temple, which they had desecrated by their idolatries. 3. *The weapon it employed.* A small army, which had routed Judah's large host. This was reversing the experience of Judah, as, *e.g.*, when Asa with five hundred and eighty thousand soldiers defeated Zerah with a million of infantry and three hundred charioteers (ch. xiv. 10). As Asa's victory was due to Jehovah's help, so Joash's surrender was explicable only on the supposition that Jehovah had forsaken him and Hazael been commissioned to execute wrath upon him.

II. Joash slain by conspirators. (Ver. 25.) 1. *When?* "After the Syrians had departed from him." Though he had escaped the doom which sought him on the battle-field, it seemed as if justice would not suffer him to live (cf. Acts xxviii. 4). Scarcely had the Syrians departed than the sleuth-hound of retribution was again upon his trail. Only wounded by soldiers' spears, he was slaughtered by assassins' swords. 2. *Where?* In his castle-palace at Millo (2 Kings xii. 20), and on his bed, *i.e.* while invalided by his wounds. Death found him in a fortress, behind which he doubtless expected to be secure, and at a moment when, perhaps, that expectation was high through the healing of his wounds. 3. *By whom?* His own servants, whose names are given: "Zabad [or Jozakat, Kings] the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabitess." Led astray by those who should have been his servants, the princes, he was put to death by his actual servants. He had betrayed his country to foreign gods, by men of foreign extraction he was destroyed. Divine retributions frequently correspond to the character of the offence they punish. 4. *Why?* Because of the "blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest." They meant to reward him for his truculent deed against Zechariah. How they came to champion the cause of Jehoiada's murdered son is not said. Perhaps they shared the popular feeling, which had never wholly approved of the murder; and when they witnessed the disaster which had come upon their arms, with the judgment that had fallen on the princes, they concluded that Zechariah's blood must be avenged if prosperity was again to return to Judah; and believing they would find, in the public mind, approval for their action, they despatched the wounded man upon his bed at Millo. Their calculations concerning the verdict of the people were not astray. Nobody regretted Joash's untimely end. His subjects "buried him in the city of David," where his fathers lay entombed, but they suffered not his carcase to desecrate the mausoleum of the kings.

Learn: 1. The overruling providence of God. Things come to pass at his ordering. 2. The certainty that sin will be punished. Though judgment be delayed, it is not averted.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

This chapter is filled up with a very graphic account of the entire career of Amaziah, and its twenty-eight verses are paralleled by the twenty verses of 2 Kings xiv. 1—20, where the narrative reads in several places much more curtly. Our chapter opens with the familiar anticipatory summary of the man, his age, pedigree, and character, whose course is to be detailed more precisely in following verses, again and yet again sounding the clear key-note of an unclean character and reign (vers. 1, 2); it proceeds to record the king's avenging of his father's murder (vers. 3, 4); his successful sally against "the children of Seir," with the incident of the affronted division of army, formed of them that "came to him out of Ephraim" (vers. 5—13); his defection to idolatry, and insult put upon the faithful "prophet" (vers. 14—16); his jaunty and provocative challenge to Joash of Israel, to his own overthrow (vers. 17—24); his end (vers. 25—28).

Ver. 1.—**Twenty and five years old . . . reigned twenty and nine years.** Glance at notes on vers. 1, 15, 17 of foregoing chapter, from which it appears that, as Joash died *ætat.* forty-seven, and Amaziah was now twenty-five, he must have been born when his father was twenty-two years old, and Jehoaddan correspondingly likely to have been one of the two wives Jehoiada selected for Joash, at the age, on *other* data, of twenty-one years. **Of Jerusalem.** This affix to the mother's name may perhaps carry credit to the memory of Jehoiada, for having been careful to select a woman of the honoured city rather than of any provincial or even less worthy city.

Ver. 2.—**Not with a perfect heart.** This is illustrated by his coming "to set up the gods of Edom" (vers. 14—16, 20); also by what the parallel supplies, that he resembled Joash rather than David, and did not suppress "the high places, sacrifices, and incense-burning" (2 Kings xiv. 3, 4). In almost all cases, the *not-perfect* heart speaks of that which *began* well, but did not "endure unto the end."

Ver. 3.—**Was established to him**; Hebrew, חָזְקָה. This is kal conjugation of the verb, which we found in piel in ver. 5 of foregoing chapter, and there rendered "repair." The kal force of the word is simply to "be strong" (Gen. xli. 57; Josh. xvii. 13; 2

Kings xiv. 5). The hiph., to "make strong," or "confirm," as it is rendered here, is found in 2 Kings xv. 19. Again and again the disorders of the kingdom and the violent deaths of prophets and kings must have greatly contributed to nervous apprehensions, in fact only too just, when a new king ascended the throne. In the parallel and in passage last quoted the words, "in his hand," follow the verb. Amaziah both needed to get his own hand in, according to modern phrase, and to get things well into his hand. **His servants.** It may be held surprising that they should have been found "in the place," or should now be *his servants* at all. The explanation may be either that their guilt had not yet been known, or, if known, had not been fixed upon them.

Ver. 4.—Slew not their children. Emphasis (the emphasis of *mention*, at any rate) is laid upon this, perhaps partly to show that Amaziah did in some measure walk by "the Law of the Lord," and partly because of numerous cases that had grown up to the opposite (2 Kings ix. 8, 26; Josh. vii. 24, 25, *where, however, very possibly all were more or less aiders and abettors of the wickedness*). For Moses' clearly written rehearsal of "the commandment of the Lord," on this subject, see the marginal references, Deut. xxiv. 16; Jer. xxxi. 29, 30; Ezek. xviii. 4, 19, 20.

Ver. 5.—This and the following five verses are entirely omitted in the parallel, which contents itself with giving in its ver. 7, in fewer words, but with the supplement of other matter, what is contained in our ver. 11. **Found them three hundred thousand.** Compare Asa's "five hundred and eighty thousand" (ch. xiv. 8), and Jehoshaphat's "eleven hundred and sixty thousand" (ch. xvii. 14—19; *see note, however, on these verses, and the improbability of numbers so high*). The Hebrew text of the second clause of this verse simply says, "he set them" (יַעֲמִדֵם), or placed them according to . . . fathers' houses, under captains, etc., glancing most naturally at Numb. i. 2—ii. 34. **Twenty years old and above** (comp. 1 Chron. xxvii. 23).

Ver. 6.—Out of Israel. The next verse tells us that "all the children of Ephraim" (which was strictly the northern Israel's chief tribe) are hereby designated. It is not quite clear that this Israel is exactly conterminous with the Israel of ch. xiii. 3, the identity of which, however, with Joab's Israel (2 Sam. xxiv. 9) is very probable. The boundaries of the strict tribe of Ephraim, whose ancestor was Joseph's younger son, are described in Josh. xvi. 5. The tribe were located as nearly as possible in the centre of the land. Ephraim, however, is here, as in many other places, as the name of the royal tribe, so named upon the whole of the northern kingdom (Isa. ix. 8; xvii. 3; xxviii. 3; *several times in almost every chapter of Hosea, and for a typical instance, cf.* Hos. xiv. 8).

Ver. 7.—(See foregoing chapter, ver. 19.) The name of this man of God does not transpire. **To wit, with.** These three words, all in italic type, if entirely omitted, and not even the preposition adopted, as in the Revised Version, into the ordinary type, will leave the intention of the writer clearer rather than less clear.

Ver. 8.—It is hard to feel satisfied as to the correct rendering of this verse. The drift of the *next* verse, which shows Amaziah a convert to the strong exhortation of the man of God, makes either alternative allowable under the present text very untimely, and not very much in accord with what we should look for at the lips of the man of God. The very conceivable way out of the difficulty is to read לֹא, hyphened to אם (all the rather that no *vau* is present in בּא, as the present text is), and proceed to supply בא or בוא again before אַתָּה, crediting some copyist with confusion of eye through these having come close together in his manuscript. The rendering will then be straightforward, and prepare the way for Amaziah's yielding conformably with the tenor of the next verse. "But if not" (*i.e.* if thou wilt not be guided by my remonstrance as to Ephraim), "go thou, be on the alert, exert all the strength possible for the battle, and yet nevertheless God will cause thee to stumble." And the remaining sentence may bear this significance, "For God hath power to help thee though alone, or to cast thee down though supported by an extra hundred thousand." If such alteration or conjectural restoration of the text be not accepted, we may harmonize the facts of the case with the most utter faithfulness of lip on the part of the prophet, by translating, "For in very truth, if thou go at all, and though thou make the best preparations, God shall make it go ill with thee." And Amaziah is persuaded to *this* point, that he will neither risk the lives of them of Ephraim vainly, nor risk the likelier displeasure of God on himself. He yields only partly, and therefore is nothing benefited. The difficulty is left untouched, that the prophet did not simply *in toto* forbid Amaziah to go, and that, saving them of Ephraim, he saves them to be a second scourge for the back of Amaziah, though he took his prophet's advice so far, and lost his own money. A careful and devout observer of human life and perverseness, when once these commit themselves to the vain struggle with God, and equally vain attempt to haggle with his providence as to how much to yield and how much to resist and withhold, cannot but be struck with the photograph here thrown off, and that it is a faithful one, of hard facts that have met together disastrously times without number in men's lives. The sum, then, of the matter of our vers. 7, 8 may amount to this: "Under no circumstances take Israel, and if thou go thyself with all best preparations, yet know that God shall destroy thee."

Ver. 9.—This verse is consummate in the two touches by which it sets forth the phase of earth's calculatingness respecting the perishable, and Heaven's swift disposal of any such trifling difficulty.

Ver. 10.—It appears that, though this contingent from Israel's land was a hired force, yet for some reason their heart was in their calling, perhaps in anticipation of plunder. It may well be that they asked why they were discharged; and whether the right answer were given them, that the Lord dwelt not among them, or some wrong answer, it evidently did not improve matters, but rankled in their hearts till it found relief (vers. 13, 22), as they concluded that either their ability or fidelity, or both, were called in question. The 'Speaker's Commentary' very aptly cites the keen resentment and mortification that the Athenians are recorded to have felt in similar circumstances as told in Plutarch's 'Lives:' "Cimon," § 17. **Separated them.** This is the verb occurring several times in the first verses of Gen. i. (יַבְדִּילֵם); there it is always followed by the preposition בֵּי, when speaking of the separating of two things *from* one another. Though this be meant here, it is not what is exactly said, and the prefix preposition לְ before the substantive (לְהַגְּדוּד) may, as Keil says, be regarded as designating the appositional accusative to that affixed in the shape of the pronoun "them" to the verb.

Ver. 11.—**Strengthened himself.** The hithp. conjugation of our already familiar verb חָזַק; it was not a healthy strengthening, and this may be considered denoted in the fact that the work was all his own, and that he wrought himself up. **The valley of salt.** Commonly supposed to be the *plain* south of the Salt Sea, but according to Stanley ('Sinai and Palestine,' Appendix, § 2. 5, pp. 482, 483), more probably a "ravine near Petra" (1 Chron. xviii 12; 2 Sam. viii. 13). (For the association of Seir with Edom, see Gen. xxxvi. 17—20; ch. xx. 10.)

Ver. 12.—**The top of the rock.** The parallel uses the Hebrew word without translation, *Selah* (הַסֶּלַע). There is little doubt that this is *Petra* (Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' 305; Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' 87—92). The parallel tells us the interesting fact that Amaziah, perhaps under the influence of a spasmodic touch of devoutness or gratitude, changed the name of Selah, or rather endeavoured to change it, to Joktheel, which Gesenius translates "subjugated of God." This name had already occurred in Josh xv. 38. The new name, however, did not last, as the Edomites recovered soon the country of (ch. xxviii. 17; Amos i. 11; Isa. xvi. 1, 2) Arabia Petræa, of which Selah or Petra was the capital. **Left alive.** The Revised Version correctly renders, *carry away alive.* The cruelty of the Edomites receives many illustrations (see last references, and Ezek. xxv. 12—14; Obad. 1—15).

Ver. 13.—**The soldiers . . . sent back . . . fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon.** There is probably something to read between the lines here, to wit, that the soldiers returned to their master and king (Joash of Israel), and were by him remitted to this work. The mention of Samaria before Beth-horon (see map) indicates it, and the words "sent back" may be held to imply, at least, that they first *went* back—that the disappointment of spoil was the chief part of their aggravations, so that now the rather they got their much spoil, and note made thereof, and that—since not so much the instructive and so far forth more excusable revenge on the part of the disappointed soldiers, but the deliberate plan and order of their king had brought about this devastation of Amaziah's domains, in *this* fact we have the key of what we read in our vers. 17, 18, etc., and of the very cool manner in which Amaziah challenged Joash. The cities of Judah attacked were apparently those that once had belonged to Ephraim. **Smote three thousand of them;** *i.e.* of the people of them.

Ver. 14.—**Brought the gods of the children of Seir . . . to be his gods.** Amaziah's devout gratitude to God, and acknowledgment of him in the name Joktheel, was soon gone, and at the very last, grown confident, he loses all, and realizes the fulfilment of the "man of God's" prophetic denunciations.

Ver. 15.—**He sent unto him a prophet.** We are again not told *whom.* The tone of the prophet, and the words given us as his in the latter half of ver. 16, would lead us to think it was the same "man of God;" but we cannot assert it, and had it been the same, it would more probably have transpired. The history now often reminds us of ch. xxiv. 16.

Ver. 16.—The chapter well keeps up in this verse its graphic character, though the culminating instances of it are yet to come. **Forbear.** The faithful prophet is "wise as the serpent, harmless as the dove." He *does* forbear, but not till the application of his speech, and all that was needful is most outspokenly (more so than before he had heard the usual coward fashion of the tyrant's threat) pronounced. *His* forbearing, therefore, is open to no charge of moral cowardice and unprophet-like infidelity.

Ver. 17.—Took advice; *i.e.* took *counsel;* as in foregoing verse, "Art thou made king's counsellor?" and as in same verse, "counselled" should read instead of "determined." The verb (יָעַץ), in kal, niph., and once only in hithp., occurs just eighty times, always in this sense, and almost always so rendered in the Authorized Version, Let us see one another in the face. A refined analogy to this expression, with all its speaking significance, occurs in 2 Sam. ii. 13; and, perhaps yet more remarkably, a strange semblance between vers. 14, 15, 17 of that chapter and our vers. 21, 22 may be noticed.

Ver. 18.—The thistle . . . sent to the cedar. While other history shows frequently the abounding Eastern delight in this exact kind of composition, it will be remembered that it is not absent from Scripture, and that this is not the first recorded instance of it by three hundred and fifty years, for see Judg. ix. 7—15. *The thistle;* Hebrew, חוֹחַ. The word occurs, beside the four times here and in the parallel, eight other times: 1 Sam. xiii. 6; ch. xxxiii. 11; Job xxxi. 40; xli. 2; Prov. xxvi. 9; Cant. ii. 2; Isa. xxxiv. 13; Hos. ix. 6. Although, then, the word we have here is not the "bramble" (אָטָד) of Judg. ix. 15, which also is brought before us in its contrast with Lebanon's cedar, yet the bramble bush, chiefly in virtue of its characteristic *thorn,* best answers to the average suggestions of all the twelve instances of the use of our word.

Ver. 19.—If the contents of this verse do not fail to impress with a persuasion of the keen mental gift of Joash, they do not fall far short of warranting some persuasion of a certain moral sense and goodness about him also. He knows human nature well, and Amaziah's particular variety therein perfectly well. And many would have snapped at the opportunity of humbling such a man. But not so Joash; he enjoys, indeed, the opportunity of satisfying his own sarcasm and patronizingness, but would still spare Amaziah's people and save him from himself. This does not resemble, at any rate, the commonest, poorest, hungriest style of soul. To boast. Our text gives us here hiph. infinitive construct, where the parallel has niph. imperative. This lends the more effective shaft to the invective of Joash, though without material difference to the sense.

Ver. 20.—The whole of the religious reflection, with its special post-Captivity significance of this verse, is wanting in the parallel, and finds no suggestion either thence or from common authorities. The parallel shows the statement, But Amaziah would not hear, followed up immediately by "Therefore Jehoash . . . went up." Our own verse, in the use of the plural pronoun them, and again they, takes some slight amount of the weight of guilt in the matter of the idolatry from the shoulders of the king, that it may be shared by the people, and no doubt chiefly again by the "princes" (ch. xxiv. 17).

Ver. 21.—Beth-shemesh. The Beth-shemesh of Judah, on the borders of Judah, Dan, and the Philistines, is to be distinguished from that on the boundary of Issachar (Josh. xix. 22), and "the fenced city of Naphtali" (Josh. xix. 38).

Ver. 23.—Joash . . . took; Hebrew, תָּפַשׂ, "seized" (as Gen. xxxix. 12), or "caught up" (as Deut. ix. 17), or "capture" (as Josh. viii. 8). The gate of Ephraim (see Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 348). It led out on the north or north-west side of the city. There is very little to identify it with the high gate of Benjamin (see ditto, p. 346). The corner gate. This is not the translation of our Hebrew text (שַׁעַר הַפּוֹנֶה, which, see margin, means "that looketh"), but of the Hebrew text of the parallel (הַפִּנָּה); see pp. 343—346 of Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' and map facing p. 334, 2nd edit. Four hundred cubits. Probably about a hundred and eighty yards.

Ver. 24.—No mention is made in the parallel of that custodian of treasures in the house of God, here called Obed-Edom, and who possibly was a descendant of the Obed-Edom of David's time (2 Sam. vi. 10; 1 Chron. xiii. 13); or an Obed-Edom "a porter" (1 Chron. xv. 18; xvi. 38; xxvi. 4, 8). The present verse is an interesting one for pointing out the exact differences, even to the minutest of them, in what the two writers (of Kings and Chronicles) respectively took from a common original; *e.g.* the writer of Kings has "he took;" leaves out "Obed-Edom;" has not the preposition "in" before "the house;" has "Jehovah" instead of "God;" has the preposition "in" before "treasures;" and has "Samaria-*ward*" (*i.e.* to Samaria) instead of only "Samaria;" the writer of Chronicles differing in each of these respects. All the gold . . . in the house of God. See 2 Kings xii. 17, 18, from which we must conclude that Hazael had already had the pick both for quantity and for quality. The hostages also; the phrase runs in the Hebrew text, "and sons [or, 'the sons'] of the hostages" (וְאֵת בְּנֵי הַתַּעֲרֻבוֹת); the literal rendering of which is "children or sons of *pledges,*" i.e. *hostages.* The word (and indeed the practice so prevalent elsewhere) is found only here and in the parallel.

Ver. 25.—Amaziah . . . lived after the death of Joash. The composition of the previous two verses dismisses delicately the fact that Joash, ignominiously bringing "Amaziah to Jerusalem" (ver. 23), contemptuously left him there, with a present of his life, though less his honour and much wealth.

Ver. 26.—**The book of the kings of Judah and Israel.** The parallel has "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah." Considering the amount and the character of the resemblance that we have noticed between the narratives in Kings and in our own text, and assuming that the work to which each compiler calls attention for the fuller elucidation of his subject of biography is the work which he has himself most largely laid under contribution, then we should justly feel in this instance that we had no feeble argument for the identity of the two works, called by rather different titles—by the writer of the pre-Captivity, "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah," and by him of the post-Captivity, "the book of the kings of Judah and Israel."

Ver. 27.—**Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord.** Let it be particularly noted that the entire of this sentence (which is a strong anachronism *sui generis*) is wanting in the parallel. It is, of course, in its matter intrinsically true, but none the less misleading in its *form*. The object of the writer cannot be doubted, as so many a cross-light is thrown upon it, in other places, viz. to connect the rise and the operativeness of the conspiracy with the *fact* that (though not the exact date at which) the king had turned aside from Jehovah to idols. **They made a conspiracy.** When every deduction is made, it may be that the conspiracy was one that was long hatching, and one which began in embryo from the date of Amaziah's ignominious return to Jerusalem. Very certain it is that this would be historic certainty with the Paris of the past century or more. The French would have required a deadly explanation of such an affront, if brought upon them by any ruler of theirs. **He fled to Lachish.** In the Shefelah of Judah, and a strongly fortified place (ch. xi. 9; Josh. x. 3, 32; xv. 39; 2 Kings xiv. 19; xviii. 14; xix. 8; Isa. xxxvi. 2; Jer. xxxiv. 7; Micah i. 13). Eusebius places it seven Roman miles south of Eleutheropolis.

Ver. 28.—**They brought him upon horses;** Hebrew text, "upon the horses," *i.e.* those same royal horses presumably with which he had fled to Lachish. This seems the most natural suggestion arising from the memorandum made here, and may indicate that they visited him with no additional gratuitous disrespect. **In the city of Judah.** Probably an incorrect text for that of 2 Kings xiv. 20, "the city of David," which is found in some of the manuscripts.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—28.—*Another type of uncertain character.* We are at once advised, in reference to Amaziah, that he "did right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart." The expression might be supposed to cover the description of a man whose life was in the main right, but who was betrayed by temptation into some serious sins, of which, like David, he bitterly repented, but genuinely repented, and was restored to peace and favour. No such interpretation, however, is here possible. And as there are some very marked features in the *character* of the folly and sin of Amaziah, they must not be overlooked or missed, having due regard to the brevity and exactitude of Scripture biography. We have here, then—

I. A MAN WHOSE DISCERNMENT WAS SUCH THAT HE WAS EQUAL TO SEEING AND TAKING WARNING AND GODLY ADVICE. It is in the heart of Amaziah to fight with the Edomites. It is a temptation with him again, as with predecessors of his on the throne, to borrow and pay for the help of the separated kingdom of Israel. Certain kinds of friendship are certain to turn out certain snares. Our safety is often simply a *complete* separation from persons or things that have been found to partake of the nature of a snare. These two things look strange—only too natural, if we know enough of our own weak, self-deceiving hearts—in the attitude of Amaziah at this moment. He listens to the teaching of the prophet, is no doubt startled and vexed thus to be called on to forfeit his methods and arrangements for the warfare that he would war, *but* seems to take his stand rather on the money that he perceives he will forfeit for nothing, as it seems to him! This is one side of the matter. But the other shows him, happily, both amenable to the prophet's reminder that God was "able to give him much more" than that hundred talents; and also equal to the effort of dismissing his hired mercenaries of Israel, and of encountering thereby their fierce indignation. Amaziah had heeded the warning of the prophet (ver. 8), and he now heeds the assurance with trustful faith of the same prophet; he goes up to war, and has a splendid success.

II. A MAN WHOSE DISCERNMENT, UNDER SOME UNTOWARD INFLUENCE, SEEMED ALMOST SUDDENLY TO BECOME SO BLUNTED THAT HE CANNOT BROOK A GODLY PROPHET'S REMONSTRANCE, BUT DEFIANTLY AND WITH MENACE REJECTS IT. There is scarcely room to doubt *what* had wrought in the interim the disastrous change. Success! Boastfulness and self-confidence had been the untimely growth of the very ground where gratitude, obedience, self-distrust, and the profoundest disposition of reliance on God and his prophet should have been found. Success had more than turned the brain of Amaziah. He worships the gods who had *not* delivered him. He worships the gods who had *not* delivered "their own people," whom *he* had destroyed. He worships not, and glorifies not, his own God and the God of his fathers, but is a marvel of an apostate, and a monster of blinded ingratitude, and a monument of blunted discernment, of perverted fatuity!

III. A MAN FOR WHOM HIS TOWERING SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND SELF-GLORIFICATION EXCITE THE PITY, BEG THE WARNING, AND RECEIVE THE BEST AND THE HONEST ADVICE OF THE VERY FOE WHOM HE INSULTINGLY CHALLENGES TO FIGHT. It is evident that the King of Israel was able to read the human nature that was in Amaziah of Judah (vers. 18—20). And it is evident that the King of Israel did *not* desire to be answerable for the blood of the same Amaziah. He "puts him to the worse," takes much spoil of him, breaks down the walls of his city—the holy city, and, bathos of humiliation for Amaziah, "took *him*," "brought *him* to" that, his own city, and *left* him there, in all his fallen glory and mulcted wealth, to meditate on "the wages of sin," even when they fall short of death. Men's enemies sometimes love their lives and souls better, alas! than they do themselves.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—"*Doing right, but——*" It is well, indeed, when iniquity is qualified with some redeeming features, as we are thankful to think it often is. A man is ungodly, or cruel, or self-indulgent, or mercenary, *but* he has something in him which makes him much less condemnable than he would otherwise be. Unfortunately, goodness also is often qualified; of the man concerning whom we have much to say in praise there is something serious to say by way of detraction. Of *every* good man there may be something to record which is not favourable; but the qualification may be so slight that it is the mere "dust in the balance." Too often it has to be "written in heaven," and perhaps upon earth also, that he "did what was right, *but* not with a perfect heart." There are some—

I. DISCERNIBLE DEFICIENCIES IN CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. One Christian man is blameless in behaviour so far as the main features of morality are concerned, *but* he is so reserved and reticent, so unapproachable, that he exerts but very little influence. Another is very ardent and enthusiastic in the cause of Christ, very open-hearted and open-handed, *but* he is very irritable and ill-tempered, so that he is avoided or even disliked. A third is very tender and sympathetic in spirit, with a ready ear and an unselfish consideration for every tale of difficulty or distress, *but* he is very weak, pliant, credulous; no one can attach any weight to his judgment. A fourth is possessed of many of the virtues and graces of Christian character, *but* he is very weak in some one direction, much too open to temptation of one particular kind, and his friends are always apprehensive lest he should succumb, and fall quite seriously. These are defects (1) to be pointed out by friends, and to be recognized frankly by those who are the subjects of them; (2) to be carefully, conscientiously, devoutly corrected and removed, lest the "gospel of Christ be hindered," lest the Master himself be displeased and dishonoured. But there are—

II. MORE SERIOUS INCONSISTENCIES. 1. *In Christian life.* It may be that one who has considered himself, and who has been considered, a true disciple of Jesus Christ, falls back, falls down (1) into condemnable self-indulgence; or (2) into an arrogance of spirit and haughtiness of bearing which are as hateful to men as (we know) they are offensive to God; or (3) into a lightness and irreverence of tone which cannot fail to be as displeasing to Christ as it is painful to the devout and earnest-minded among men; or (4) into a serious selfishness of soul which has no eye for anything but its own personal and passing interests. 2. *In Christian work.* It may be that one who has shown much earnestness in the field of sacred usefulness, either (1) loses all interest in that for which he once thought much and laboured hard, or (2) becomes so opinionated and so peremptory that no one can co-operate with him, and he has to be left alone. He is practically disabled by his self-assertiveness. Now, there is too often found to be—

III. ONE SUPREME MISTAKE. It is that which was probably committed by Amaziah, viz. that of never yielding ourselves *thoroughly* to the service of God. It is likely that the King of Judah only gave half an heart to the worship of Jehovah; that his piety was superficial, formal, constrained, essentially and radically imperfect; that he was like the young man of the Gospel narrative, who had "kept the commandments from his youth up," but who was never so thoroughly in earnest as to be ready to give up everything to attain eternal life (Mark x. 17—22). If we do not yield ourselves wholly to our Divine Saviour, we shall find, as we pursue our way, that at some important crisis our obedience will be at fault; or our devotion will fail; or our character will be blemished, and our reputation will break down; or we shall leave the field and lose our reward (2 John 8). Therefore: 1. Let us realize how great, how supreme, how prevailing, are the claims of our Divine Redeemer. 2. Let us offer our hearts and lives to him in full and glad self-surrender. Then shall it *not* be written of us, that "we did right, *but* not with a perfect heart."—C.

Vers. 5—9.—*Gold, and the favour of God.* There is something which approaches, if it does not amount to, the ludicrous in the question so solemnly proposed by Amaziah, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" Could it be the right thing and the wise thing to sacrifice all that money? Were a hundred talents to be thrown away? Supposing he defeated the enemy without the help of these mercenaries, would it not be a mortifying thing that he had spent such a sum to no purpose? But Amaziah was so situated that he had to make the choice which has so often to be made; he had to choose between sacrificing his money or forfeiting the favour of his God. He had the wisdom to accept the former alternative, and to believe the prophet, that the Lord was "able to give him more than this." On the choice which we make, when this question comes up for settlement by ourselves, there hang great issues. Wherefore let us well consider—

I. THE LIMITATIONS TO THE VALUE OF GOLD. Gold serves many useful purposes; through it we can secure the necessaries and the comforts of life, the conditions of education, the advantages of good society; but its power is very limited, after all. 1. Its possession, so far from ensuring happiness, often entails much burdensomeness, and always imposes a heavy responsibility. 2. Its tenure is slight and short; an accident or a revolution, impossible to foresee, may take it suddenly away, and at death it must be relinquished. 3. It is wholly powerless in the presence of some of the sadder and graver evils of our life. 4. It tempts to indolence and indulgence, and it may be doubted whether it does not spoil more lives than it brightens and blesses.

II. THE BOUNDLESS BLESSEDNESS OF THE FAVOUR OF GOD. The Lord was not only able to give Amaziah "much more than this," much more than "a hundred talents of silver," but he was able to bless him in ways which were incomparably superior to such material enrichment. And so is he able and most willing to bless us. Willingly should we part with gold and silver at his bidding, to be true and loyal disciples to our Master, to preserve our spiritual integrity; for if we do this "for Christ's sake and the gospel's" (Mark viii. 35) there will be for us ample and most abundant compensation for what we lose. 1. The peace of God, which passes understanding, and which surpasses all material values. 2. The positive and active friendship of our Lord, and of the good and true. 3. A life of noble and fruitful service. 4. A death of hope. 5. A future of immortal glory. In view of these things, we need not be greatly concerned about the loss of a hundred or a thousand talents.—C.

Ver. 15.—*The folly of irreligion.* The remonstrance addressed by the prophet of the Lord to Amaziah was well grounded; his argument was conclusive. We are simply astonished at—

I. THE INFATUATION OF IDOLATRY. What insensate folly of the King of Judah to turn from the service of Jehovah, who had just granted him a signal proof of his power and his goodness, to the service and the worship of the gods of the very people he had defeated (ver. 14)! Well might he be reproached for conduct so culpable and so irrational. Any one who was conversant with the history of the Hebrew people, even up to this time, might have known that faithfulness to Jehovah was accompanied by victory and prosperity, and that, contrariwise, idolatry was attended with misery and disaster. And yet, such was "the deceitfulness of sin," we find king and courtier, priest and people, lapsing into disobedience and iniquity. We are not now under the temptation which proved too strong for Amaziah, but we may make a mistake as serious and as senseless as he made.

II. THE FOLLY OF IRRELIGION, AND ESPECIALLY OF SPIRITUAL UNFAITHFULNESS. For what is it that we see? 1. A large number of men and women honouring various false gods; it is some form of temporal success; it may be physical enjoyment, or it may be the possession of wealth, or it may be social position, or it may be political power, or it may be professional distinction. 2. These votaries are not blessed by the deities they are serving; for these "powers" are weakness itself; they "cannot deliver their own people," their own adherents. They *do* not deliver them from failure, from disappointment, from heartache, from misery. They do not gladden the heart and brighten and beautify the life of those who are seeking and serving them. Even those who have reached the heights they set themselves to climb, who have grasped the goal towards which they ran, have confessed, again and again, that they have not found rest unto their soul, but rather disquietude, craving, envy—a sense of dreariness and defeat. Why, then, should we add our souls to the number of the unblessed, of the deceived and the betrayed? Why, indeed, should we who have tasted of better things be so indescribably foolish as to abandon "our Rock" for "their rock" (Deut. xxxii. 31)? Why should *we* seek after the "gods that cannot deliver their own people"? And this folly is the greater when we take into our account—

III. THE PROVED WISDOM OF PIETY. For has it not been abundantly confirmed that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come"? Do not we who have followed Christ know, and can we not testify, that to be his true disciple, his faithful servant—this is to be: 1. Gladdened with all joy. 2. Comforted in all sorrow. 3. Enlarged in all obscurity and lowliness of sphere. 4. Engaged in the best and noblest of all works—the work of human elevation. 5. Sustained by the most exalted hope—the hope of everlasting life in his own royal presence.—C.

Vers. 17—24.—*Human presumption.* In the correspondence between these two kings and the action which ensued we have a very striking illustration of the evil of human presumption.

I. IT MAY BE BEGOTTEN OF A SLIGHT SUCCESS. "Thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thy heart lifteth thee up to boast" (ver. 19). Some men are soon inflated; even a little "knowledge puffeth up." And a very slight achievement, in art, or in song, or in speech, or in manufacture, is enough to fill them with vanity, to cause them to "think more highly of themselves than they ought to think," to make them presume upon an ability which they are far from possessing. Complacency is an element which soon rises to the surface in human nature; it takes a very slight touch to stir it.

II. IT MAY BEGET A SINFUL SCORNFULNESS. On this occasion the presumption of Amaziah provoked the contemptuous answer of Joash (ver. 18). There is something very unbeautiful and unbecoming in human scorn. Derision is a rather frequent action, and those who employ it take great pride in it. But we may be sure that it is offensive in the sight of the Lord of love. We may pity, we may condemn, we may reproach one another, rightly and faithfully. But to pour out on one another the spittle of our scorn,—this is an unworthy, an ungodly, a blameful thing. Joash no doubt felt a keen satisfaction in his reference to the cedar and the thistle, and sent his message with enjoyment; but the Father of spirits would be grieved to see one of his children thus treating another with withering contempt. Scorn may be a pleasant thing, but it is a sinful thing.

III. IT SUFFERS AN HUMILIATING DEFEAT. (Vers. 21, 22.) Failure and humiliation are the inevitable end of human presumption. It is certain in time to undertake some task too great for its strength, to go up to a battle against a foe which it cannot fight;

and we know what will be the issue. Whatever the field may be—whether political, commercial, literary, ecclesiastical, social—the man of presumptuous spirit is on his way to an ignominious defeat. He will attempt the leap which he cannot make, and he will come down heavily to the ground.

IV. IT ENDURES OTHER PENALTIES BESIDES. In the case of Joash it meant, beside defeat, captivity, the violation of the capital, and the spoliation of the temple, the miseries of remorse as he pondered in his palace. How senselessly he had brought this calamity on himself (see ver. 15)! Presumption is sure to result in adversity of more kinds than one. It ends in the bitter mortification of defeat, of conscious overthrow and dishonour; it usually ends (as here) in loss, either of property, or of reputation, or of friendship—perhaps of all of these at the same time. It frequently brings down upon a man the severe reproaches of those who have been injured along with the principal offender. For guilt of this kind commonly involves misery to many beside the criminal. It is Jerusalem, and even Judah, as well as Amaziah, on whom the blow comes down. 1. Let us know ourselves well, lest we make an egregious and fatal mistake. 2. Let us ask God to reveal our feebleness to our own eyes.—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*The accession of Amaziah.* I. THE TITLE HE HAD TO THE THRONE. The son of Joash, most likely the eldest. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. Whether she, like her husband, had declined into idolatry cannot be told.

II. THE REIGN HE ENJOYED ON THE THRONE. Twenty-nine years—eleven years less than his father reigned. Eighteen years older than Joash when he obtained the crown, he was only seven years older when he put it off. Clearly idolatry in those days was not conducive to longevity.

III. THE CHARACTER HE MAINTAINED ON THE THRONE. Mixed. 1. *Good.* "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," as his father did while Jehoiada lived (ch. xxiv. 2); *i.e.* he abandoned idolatry and became a worshipper of Jehovah. 2. *Not perfect.* "Not with a perfect heart," as it should have been (1 Kings viii. 61), after the examples of Asa (ch. xv. 17; 1 Kings xv. 14) and David (2 Kings xiv. 3; Ps. ci. 2). His return to the worship of Jehovah was probably (1) dictated by fear, occasioned by the recollection of his father's untimely and violent death; hence (2) deficient in extent, the high places not being removed (2 Kings xiv. 4); and (3) destitute of permanence—in fact, dropped when he felt himself secure upon his throne (ver. 14).

IV. THE ACTS HE PERFORMED FROM THE THRONE. Two. 1. *A deed of vengeance.* "He slew his servants that had killed the king his father." (1) Justice demanded this. If his father deserved to die, which seems indisputable, it is not clear that Zabad and Jehozabad had a right to be his executioners. (2) Filial piety approved this. Under the Law it was the next kinsman's duty to avenge the blood of a slain relative (Deut. xix. 12). Amaziah would have proved himself an unnatural son had he spared any longer than he could help the assassins of his father. (3) Prudence recommended this. Doubtless Amaziah feared that some day the fate of Joash would be his, if these men lived. 2. *An exercise of clemency.* "He slew not their children." (1) Considering what the Law of Moses said (Deut. xxiv. 16), this was right; (2) remembering the universal practice of the Orient, it was merciful; (3) if they were young children when the wicked deed was done, it was humane as well as right.

LESSONS. 1. The vanity of earthly glory—even kings must die. 2. The imperfection of human goodness—the best of men but men at the best. 3. The impossibility of escaping for ever the due reward of one's evil deeds, except by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. 4. The beauty of clemency in all, but especially in kings. "Earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice" ('Merchant of Venice,' act iv. sc. 1).—W.

Vers. 5—13.—*A campaign against the Edomites.* I. WARLIKE PREPARATIONS. (Vers. 5, 6.) 1. *The army mustered.* "Amaziah gathered Judah together;" *i.e.* collected for review, probably in Jerusalem, all in the southern kingdom who were capable of bearing arms. 2. *The army organized.* "He made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin." Compare Samuel's prediction (1 Sam. viii. 12), and

Moses' practice (Numb. xxxi. 14; Deut. i. 15). Order and subordination indispensable to the efficiency of a host. Since the days of Jehoiada (ch. xxiii. 1; 2 Kings xi. 15) the army had probably become disorganized. 3. *The army numbered.* "And he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men—a considerably smaller force than Asa led out against Zerah (ch. xiv. 8), or than Jehoshaphat possessed (ch. xvii. 14—18). The explanation is, either that only the flower of Amaziah's troops, the picked men of the army, were numbered, or the force had been diminished by the disastrous wars of the preceding reigns. What is next stated renders this probable. 4. *The army increased.* "He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver" (£50,000, if the talent be valued at £500).

II. PROPHETIC WARNINGS. (Vers. 7, 8.) The prophet's name is not given, but his admonition is: 1. *A dissuasive.* Against allowing Israel to accompany the army of Judah to battle. If the king's recollection of former alliances with the northern kingdom did not remind him of the unadvisedness of the course he was contemplating (ch. xviii. 28; xx. 35; xxii. 5; 1 Kings xxii. 29; 2 Kings iii. 7), the earnestness of Jehovah's messenger might have startled him. 2. *A reason.* Jehovah was not with Israel, not with any of the sons of Ephraim, because of their defection into idolatry. What had been true of Rehoboam (ch. xii. 5), what had been threatened to Asa (ch. xv. 2), what had been the case with Judah in the previous reign (ch. xxiv. 20), was the habitual and seemingly permanent condition of the northern people. They had forsaken God, and he had in turn forsaken them. To seek the help of Israel, therefore, was to seek help in a quarter where no help was, rather whence hurt alone could proceed. It is hardly doubtful that the people of God err in asking the assistance of God's enemies for their schemes, whether those schemes be material such as church-building, or spiritual such as propagating the gospel, and whether that aid be in the form of money, influence, or men. The Jews who returned from Babylon would not accept assistance from the Samaritans in building their temple (Ezra iv. 3). Should the Church of Jesus Christ accept the aid of the unbelieving world? 3. *An alternative, or an exhortation.* "If thou wilt go [*i.e.* with these northern allies], then go, do *valiantly*, be strong for the battle," *i.e.* do your best—the language of irony; or, according to another rendering (Ewald, Bertheau, Keil), "If thou wilt go, go alone, do valiantly, be strong for the battle." But in this case the force of the first clause is lost, as there was no question as to "going" or "not going" put before Amaziah, but merely as to "going with" or "without Israel." 4. *A threatening or a promise.* "God shall cast thee down before the enemy," or "God shall (not) cast thee down before the enemy," the word "not" being supplied. If Amaziah went depending on the assistance of his mercenaries, he would lose the battle; if he left them behind and went forth with only his own forces, he would prove victorious. The great lesson Jehovah was constantly, by means of his prophets (Isa. xxvi. 3, 4; lvii. 13; Jer. xxxix. 18; xlii. 11; Nah. i. 7) and the events of his providence, striving to impress upon Israel and Judah was that of exclusive reliance upon himself, as the only means of ensuring their safety and continued prosperity (ch. xx. 20); the same lesson is urgently required by Christians (Rom. xv. 13; Eph. ii. 8). 5. *An argument.* "God hath power to help or to cast down"—to help his people without allies, as he helped Jehoshaphat (ch. xx. 22), Asa (ch. xiv. 12), and Abijah (ch. xiii. 15); or to cast down his people, even in spite of allies, as he did formerly with Joash (ch. xxiv. 24), with Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 36), and with Rehoboam (ch. xiii. 9), and afterwards with Ahaz (ch. xxviii. 16—19).

III. KINGLY EXCUSES. (Ver. 9.) 1. *Proposed.* Amaziah felt a difficulty about complying with the prophet's counsel. He might send back his allies to Joash in Jezreel or Samaria; but what about his talents? These his royal brother would not be likely to return. He might go to battle without his hired troops, but who would give him his silver moneys? One hundred talents was a large sum to lose even for a king. Amaziah was of Shylock's mind, "You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house" ('Merchant of Venice,' act iv. sc. 1). Like the Jew who lamented more over the loss of his ducats—his "Christian ducats," "a sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats, of double ducats . . . and jewels"—than the flight of his daughter, Amaziah mourned less the idea of parting with his mercenaries than the fact that they would carry with them his precious talents. 2. *Answered.* The man of God might have replied (1) that even if he kept his allies his hundred talents were lost, while he would certainly lose the battle in addition; or (2) that if he parted with his hirelings he would prove victorious, which would more than compensate for the loss of his talents; but the man of God responded (3) that Jehovah, if he pleased, could give him much more than a hundred talents. He said not, indeed, that Jehovah would give him more than he would lose, because considerations of money do not enter into questions of right and wrong. The moral quality of an action is not determined by its financial results. Simply the prophet stated that Jehovah could give the king much more than a hundred talents, which was true, since the silver and the gold were his (1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12; Hag. ii. 8), and he gave them to whomsoever he would (Prov. xxx. 8; Eccles. v. 19; Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2).

IV. FIELD OPERATIONS. (Vers. 10—12.) 1. *The dismissal of the mercenaries.* The army out of Ephraim was separated from his own troops and sent home to Israel. Whether the king, in discharging them, was actuated by cupidity, the desire of getting back his talents with interest, or by fear, the dread of losing the battle,—the step he took was right, being such as the man of God demanded, prudent as the issue of the campaign showed, and bold as the situation required. It was certain to excite the ire of the northern warriors, and according to the Chronicler it did: "they returned home in fierce anger." Well-doing on the part of good men may stir the wrath of others, to whom it may at times appear insulting; nevertheless, the path of duty must be adhered to, though it should lead to the estrangement of friends no less than to the loss of ducats. 2. *The advance of the army of Judah.* Amaziah took courage, added to his faith fortitude, as Christians are exhorted to do in the campaign of life (2 Pet. i. 5), and led his forces out with no ally but Jehovah, as far as the Valley of Salt (2 Sam. viii. 13; 1 Chron. xviii. 12)—a plain about two miles broad, south of the Dead Sea, absolutely devoid of vegetation, now called *El-Ghor* (Robinson). There he encountered the Edomites, or children of Mount Seir, who had revolted from Judah in the days of Jehoram (ch. xxi. 8; 2 Kings viii. 20), and whose subjugation was the object of the present campaign. 3. *The defeat of the Edomites.* (1) The destruction of their army. Ten thousand soldiers were killed, ten thousand prisoners taken. (2) The capture of their capital. Selah, "Rock" (Isa. xvi. 1), the well-known Petra or Rock city, was taken, and its name changed to Joktheel, or "conquered by God" (2 Kings xiv. 7). This remarkable city was situated in a valley (*Es Sik*, "the cleft;" called by the Arabs *Wády Musa*) running from north to south, about three quarters of a mile long, and enclosed on all sides by precipitous sandstone rocks of variegated hues, rising in some parts to a height of eight hundred or a thousand feet. (For a description of Petra, see Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 87, etc.; 'Picturesque Palestine,' vol. iii. pp. 214, etc.; 'Forty Days in the Desert,' p. 128.) (3) The slaughter of their people. If Amaziah's prisoners were hurled from the cliffs of Petra, their death must have been simply appalling.

V. UNFRIENDLY RETALIATIONS. (Ver. 13.) 1. *By whom?* The soldiers of the Israelitish army sent back by Amaziah. The Samaritans, whose aid Zerubbabel declined, "weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building" (Ezra iv. 4); and the unbelieving world would oppose, harass, and hinder the Church of Christ even more than it does, were it separated as it should be from the Church's midst (John xv. 19). But better the world's opposition, hatred, and revenge, with God's help favour, and blessing, than the world's co-operation, friendship, and approbation, with God's displeasure, withdrawal, and antagonism. 2. *For what?* For not being allowed to go to battle with Judah against Edom. An insufficient cause, since they lost nothing of their pay, while they saved their lives. Their honour, it may be supposed, was wounded; and the world holds a wound to one's honour to be a greater stroke than a buffet to one's person or a loss to one's purse. But Christ's followers ought not to take their code of morals from the world! 3. *On whom?* The cities of Judah and their inhabitants, from Samaria unto Beth-horon, now *Beit-Ur* (ch. viii. 5). Though these had no part in the offence, they must nevertheless share in the penalty. If Amaziah had done the soldiers wrong, Amaziah should have given them redress in his own person. But nations have hardly yet learnt to discriminate between offending sovereigns and offenceless subjects. When those quarrel they can only heal their feuds by setting these to cut each other's throats or blow each other into eternity by means of guns and cannons! 4. *How far?* To the taking of three thousand men and much spoil. Whether this devastation of the northern cities of Judah occurred while the Israelitish soldiers were returning home to Samaria, or, as seems more likely, when Amaziah was in Edom (Bertheau, Keil), is uncertain; that it subsequently led to a war between the two kingdoms is undoubted.

Learn: 1. The folly of entering on any enterprise in which God cannot aid. 2. The sin of resorting to means of which Heaven cannot approve. 3. The sufficiency of God's help without creature-aids. 4. The duty of withdrawing from wicked schemes, even though doing so should entail financial loss. 5. The impossibility of settling questions of right and wrong by calculations of profit and loss. 6. The insignificance of money loss as compared with loss of Divine help and favour. 7. The immense indebtedness of the world to Christianity, even while rejecting it.—W.

Vers. 14—16.—*The declension of Amaziah.* I. The nature of it. A subsidence into idolatry. On returning from the slaughter of the Edomites he brought with him the gods of the children of Seir, and, setting them up to be his gods, bowed down himself before them and burned incense unto them (ver. 14). That the Seirites were idolaters is confirmed by Moses, who gives Baal-hanan, "Baal is gracious," as one of their kings (Gen. xxxvi. 38); by Josephus, who mentions that the Idumæans had a god named Kotze ('Ant.,' xv. 7. 9); and by the Assyrian inscriptions, which show that one of their sovereigns bore the designation Kaus-malaka, *i.e.* "Kaus or Kotze is king" (Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 150).

II. The motive of it. Probably political, to enable him to complete the subjugation of the Seirites, which, as he imagined, could be best done by winning over their gods to his side (Keil). Compare the conduct of Ahaz in sacrificing to the gods of Damascus in order to obtain their assistance (ch. xxviii. 23), and of Cyrus in asking the Babylonian divinities to intercede with Bel and Nebo on his behalf (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 175). At the same time, Amaziah's idolatry just as likely had its roots in inherent depravity. If Joash fell away to Baal (ch. xxiv. 18), it is hardly surprising that Amaziah his son should have followed his example. The fallen heart gravitates towards polytheism, as the history of mankind—of Jews, Egyptians, Assyrians, Phœnicians—shows. Almost all nations in their infancy were monotheists.

III. The criminality of it. Arising from the time when this declension took place. To have lapsed into idolatry at any time would have been wicked—contrary to the express commandment of Jehovah (Exod. xx. 3, 4); to do so immediately after having enjoyed such a signal display of Jehovah's kindness in granting him a splendid victory over his enemies—to select that moment for his apostasy was surely adding insult to injury; to say the least, was to be guilty of monstrous ingratitude as well as open sin.

IV. The folly of it. Seen in the impotence of the idols to whom he bowed. The Edomite gods had not been able to save their devotees, the Seirites: where was the guarantee they could assist Amaziah? One wonders that idolaters do not see the absurdity of praying to divinities that cannot save (Isa. xlv. 20). The utter helplessness of idols and the senselessness of such as trust in them are themes of frequent illustration in Scripture (Ps. cxv. 4—8; Isa. xlvi. 1—6; Jer. ii. 28; x. 5; 1 Cor. viii. 4).

V. The danger of it. 1. *It aroused against the king Jehovah's anger.* The one living and true God can tolerate no rival claimant of man's homage. The worship of two gods, besides being impossible (Matt. vi. 24; 1 Cor. vi. 16), is provocative of wrath (Lev. xxvi. 30; Deut. xxvii. 15; Ps. xvi. 4; lxxix. 6; Isa. xlii. 17). 2. *It drew down upon him a prophet's rebuke.* The man of God said unto him, "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people," etc.? The censures of the good may be profitable, but are rarely pleasant. Their judgments, besides, when calmly given, are an index to God's mind concerning man's conduct. 3. *It excited the king's own evil disposition.* Had Amaziah not been a backslider, he would not have answered the prophet so churlishly as he did, practically telling him that nobody asked his opinion, and that if he valued his own skin he had better hold his peace. It was easy, but neither valiant nor right, for a king thus to insult or silence Jehovah's messenger; he would, by-and-by, find it harder to deal in such fashion with Jehovah himself. "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: reprove a wise man, and he will love thee" (Prov. ix. 8). Amaziah's conduct showed he was a fool (Prov. xiii. 1)—one of those that "hate him who reproveth in the gate" (Amos v. 10). 4. *It foreshadowed his ultimate fall.* It revealed to the prophet that God had determined to destroy him—more especially when it was followed by obstinate refusal of the Divine warning. It is a bad sign when faithful admonition is followed by the hardening rather than the softening of the admonished—when it confirms in sin rather than leads to repentance. *Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.* "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

Learn: 1. The danger of prosperity in turning away the heart from God. 2. The need of constantly guarding against temptation. 3. The complete absurdity of idolatry. 4. The certainty that idol-worshippers and idol-worship shall perish.—W.

Vers. 17—24.—*The battle of Beth-shemesh; or, the downfall of a boaster.* I. THE OBJECT OF THE BATTLE. 1. *The object of its promoter, Amaziah.* (1) Perhaps revenge; to punish the Israelitish sovereign for the sins of his subjects (ver. 13)—a principle of action on which man cannot always with safety proceed, though God may. Revenge, sweet to the natural heart (Jer. xx. 10), was forbidden under the Law (Lev. xix. 17, 18), and is absolutely inconsistent with the gospel (Rom. xii. 19). "Men revenge themselves out of weakness because they are offended, because they are too much influenced by self-love." This was seemingly the case with Amaziah. "A great soul overlooks and despises injuries; a soul enlightened by grace and faith leaves the judgment and revenge of them to God" (Cruden). (2) Possibly ambition; in the hope of reducing the northern kingdom to subjection. In this hope (Josephus, 'Ant.,' ix. 9. 2) he was probably confirmed by his previous success over the Edomites (ver. 14). Ambition, easily excited in the breasts of the weak, is always difficult to allay even by the wills of the strong. Wherever it exists, it is like the horse-leech's two daughters, which cry, "Give, give!" like the grave and the barren womb, the dry earth and the fire, which never say, "It is enough" (Prov. xxx. 15, 16). It commonly proves too imperious even for men of iron will, while weaklings like Amaziah it blows to destruction with a slight puff. 2. *The object of its Director, God.* If Amaziah had an aim in seeking a pitched battle with Joash King of Israel, so had Jehovah an aim in allowing him and Joash to try conclusions on the field of war. If Amaziah meant to punish Joash, Jehovah meant to punish Amaziah: which of the two, the King of Judah or the King of kings, was the more likely to succeed in accomplishing his object, it required no prophet to foretell. So in mundane affairs, generally, "man proposes," but "God disposes." Men, as free agents, are allowed to scheme and plan as they please, while God worketh all things according to the counsel of his will. Man often fails in his purposes, Jehovah never (Job xxiii. 13; Ps. cxv. 3; Isa. xlvi. 10, 11; Dan. iv. 35; Eph. i. 11).

II. THE PRELIMINARIES TO THE BATTLE. 1. *Amaziah's challenge to Joash.* (1) Deliberately offered. He acted neither in a hurry nor on his own responsibility, but at leisure and after consultation with his privy councillors and field-marshals. This only made the matter worse. It shows what wretched advisers the king had, and how set the king's heart was upon the war. Jehoshaphat had been too late in calling in Jehovah to the council of war at Samaria (ch. xviii. 4); Amaziah neglected calling him in at all. The last persons a king or parliament should apply to for advice when deliberating on the question of peace or war, are the idlers about court and the officers in a barracks. (2) Arrogantly expressed. Euphemistically phrased, "Come, let us look one another in the face," meaning "Come, let us measure strength," or "cross swords with one another;" this is one of those hypocritical formulas with which the world tries to hide from itself the wickedness of its evil deeds. Amaziah's politely worded message was an insolent challenge to the King of Israel to meet him on the field of war. (3) Fittingly answered. Amaziah's insolence had silenced the prophet (ver. 16); he was now to find that Joash would not so meekly submit to his impertinence. It may be proper for good men not to render railing for railing (1 Pet. iii. 9), but it is not to be lamented when vainglorious boasters are set down and fools answered according to their folly (Prov. xxvi. 5). 2. *Joash's response to Amaziah.* This, which

Josephus says was delivered in writing, contained two things. (1) A parable or fable (ver. 18), not unlike that of Jotham to the Shechemites (Judg. ix. 8, etc.). It is not necessary to understand the thistle or thorn as pointing to Amaziah, in comparison with whom Joash claimed to be a tall cedar, though possibly this may have exactly expressed Joash's estimate of the relative greatness of their royal persons; or to suppose that Amaziah had solicited a daughter of Joash in marriage for his son and been refused, and that out of this sprang his present warlike attitude towards Israel; or to find in the wild beast in Lebanon which trod down the thistle an allusion to the northern warriors who, should hostilities break out, would overrun and trample down the land of Judah. It is sufficient to learn what the fable was designed to teach. (2) The interpretation. This consisted of three parts: (*a*) A contemptuous rebuke. Amaziah, lifted up with pride and ambition, was stepping beyond his natural and legitimate sphere. He had conquered the Edomites, and now aspired to measure swords with the Israelites. It was pure self-conceit that lay at the bottom of his arrogance—a home-truth Amaziah might have digested with profit. (*b*) A condescending admonition. Amaziah had better stay at home. To be addressed by Joash as a wilful child might be by a wise and prudent father, must have been galling to the untamed spirit of Amaziah. (*c*) A comminatory prediction. Amaziah was meddling to his hurt, "provoking calamity" that he should fall, even he and Judah with him. Joash probably knew that Amaziah had rashly entered upon a campaign he had neither resources nor courage to sustain. *Fas est ab hoste doceri;* but Amaziah would not hear.

III. THE SCENE OF THE BATTLE. Beth-shemesh (Josh. xv. 10). 1. *The meaning of the term.* "The house of the sun." Probably the site of an ancient temple to the sun-god. The Egyptian On, or Heliopolis, *i.e.* "the city of the sun," is probably for the same reason styled Beth-shemesh (Jer. xliii. 13). 2. *The situation of the place.* On the southern border of Dan, and within the territory of Judah, about three miles west of Jerusalem, represented by the modern Arabian village *'Ain Semes*, or "sun-well," near the Wady-es-Surâr, north of which stretches a level plain suitable for a battle (Robinson, 'Bib. Res.,' vol. iii. p. 17; Thomson, 'The Land and the Book,' p. 535). Many fragments of old wall-foundations still are visible about the locality, and the modern village appears to have been built out of old materials. 3. *The historical associations of the spot.* It was one of the cities given to the Levites by the tribe of Judah (Josh. xxi. 16). The ark of the covenant long stood there (1 Sam. vi. 12). One of the officers who purveyed for Solomon's court resided there (1 Kings iv. 9). It afterwards was taken by the Philistines (ch. xxviii. 18).

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE BATTLE. 1. *The defeat of Judah.* Joash and Amaziah "looked each other in the face." Their armies collided at the spot above described. The issue was a total rout for Judah (ver. 22). 2. *The capture of Amaziah.* Joash took him prisoner of war at Beth-shemesh. Amaziah's thoughts at this moment would be pleasant company for him! Whether Joash exulted over him, taunting him with his bravery, and reminding him of the fate of the poor briar who aspired to mate with the cedar, is not recorded; to Joash's credit it should be stated that Amaziah was not put to death, or even consigned to a prison, as he deserved and might have expected, but was allowed to live and even continue on his throne (ver. 25). 3. *The destruction of a part of the wall of Jerusalem.* Approaching the metropolis of Judah with its prisoner-king, Joash, not so much perhaps with a view to obtain a triumphal gateway (Thenius), or restrain its inhabitants from reprisals in the shape of warlike operations (Bertheau), as simply to mark the capital as a conquered city (Bähr), caused about four hundred cubits of the wall to be broken down, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, *i.e.* about half of the north wall. The gate of Ephraim, called also the gate of Benjamin (Jer. xxxvii. 13; xxxviii. 7; Zech. xiv. 10), because the way to Ephraim lay through Benjamin, was most likely situated at or near the present-day gate of Damascus, the modern *Bab-el-Amud*, or, "Gate of the Column," in the second wall; while the corner gate, called also the first gate (Zech. xiv. 10), was apparently at the other end of the wall from that at which the tower of Hananeel stood (Jer. xxxi. 38), *i.e.* at the north-west angle where the wall turned southwards. 4. *The despoliation of the temple and the palace.* The pillaging of the former was not complete, but extended solely to the carrying off of the gold, silver, and vessels found in that part of the sacred building which was under the care of Obed-Edom and his sons (1 Chron. xxvi. 15), viz. in the house of Asuppim, or, "house of collections or provisions" (Neh. xii. 25)—"a building used for the storing of the temple goods, situated in the neighbourhood of the southern door of the temple in the external court" (Keil). The plundering of the latter does not appear to have been restrained. All the treasures of the king's house fell a prey to the royal spoliator. 5. *The taking of hostages.* These were required in consequence of Amaziah's liberation, as a security for his good behaviour, and were most likely drawn from the principal families. 6. *The return to Samaria.* Joash acted with becoming moderation. Though he might have killed, he spared Amaziah, and even restored him to his throne. Whereas he might have broken down the entire city wall, he overthrew only a part of it. Instead of plundering the whole temple, he ravaged merely one of its external buildings. Judah and Jerusalem he might have annexed to his empire, but he forbore. Having properly chastised his royal brother, he returned to Samaria.

Lessons. 1. A man may wear a crown and yet be a fool—witness Amaziah. 2. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." 3. "He that girdeth on his armour should not boast as he that putteth it off." 4. The hand that lets slip the dogs of war deserves to be devoured by them. 5. Clemency becomes a conqueror, and is an ornament of kings.—W.

Vers. 25—28.—*The last of Amaziah.* I. Spared by his conqueror. (Ver. 25.) Instead of being put to death, he was restored to his crown and capital, where he actually survived Joash for fifteen years. This treatment he hardly deserved, considering he had aimed at Joash's life and crown. Yet was the mercy of it nothing to that of God's treatment of sinful men, whom, though they have raised against him the standard of revolt, he nevertheless spares, forgives, and will eventually exalt to a place upon the throne with Christ his Son.

II. Punished for his apostasy. (Ver. 27.) This apostasy was committed in the earlier part of his reign (ver. 14), and soon began to bear bitter fruit, first in the defeat he sustained at the hand of Joash, probably next in the disaffection of his people, and finally in the formation of a conspiracy for his overthrow, which came to a head in the fifteenth year after Joash's death. One never knows when the evil fruits and penal consequences of sin are exhausted. The safe plan is to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. v. 11).

III. Driven from his capital. (Ver. 27.) Probably the disaffection began after the defeat by Joash and the dismantling of Jerusalem. There is no reason to suppose that Amaziah was obliged to flee until towards the end of the fifteen years referred to in the text. The immediate occasion of this flight was the discovery of a plot against his life. So David had been obliged to flee from Jerusalem when his own son Absalom conspired against him (2 Sam. xv. 16).

IV. Slain by his subjects. (Ver. 27.) Lachish, where he sought refuge, was an old Canaanitish royal city (Josh. x. 3—31; xii. 11), south-west of Jerusalem, in the lowlands of Judah (Josh. xv. 39). According to Micah (i. 13), it was the first Jewish town to be affected by Israelitish idolatry, which spread from it towards the capital. It would seem also to have been one of Solomon's chariot cities (1 Kings ix. 19; x. 26—29). It had been fortified by Rehoboam (ch. xi. 9), and was subsequently captured by Sennacherib (ch. xxxii. 9) after a long siege (Jer. xxxiv. 7). It should probably be identified with the modern *Um-Lakis*, a few miles west-south-west of the Eleutheropolis. Arrested here, the fallen monarch was despatched by the daggers of assassins, as his father before him had been (ch. xxiv. 25). As conspiracy had set the crown on Amaziah's head, so conspiracy now took it off.

V. Buried with his fathers. (Ver. 28.) Brought to Jerusalem in his own royal chariot, he was entombed beside his ancestors in the city of Judah, or of David, thus receiving an honour which was not paid to his father. He got a better funeral than he deserved, though it is well to forget men's faults at the grave's mouth. *Nihil nisi bonum de mortuis.*

VI. Succeeded by his son. (Ch. xxvi. 1.) The conspirators did not attempt to seize the crown for either themselves or any of their faction. They adhered to the legitimate succession of the house of David. As it were, this was a posthumous mercy conferred on Amaziah.

Lessons. 1. Beware of incurring the Divine anger. 2. Envy not kings or great men. 3. Prepare for the day of death. 4. Think with kindness on the dead. 5. Practise mercy towards the living.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The twenty-three verses of this chapter, entirely occupied with the career of Uzziah, have to be content with a parallel of nine verses only, viz. 2 Kings xiv. 21, 22; xv. 1—7. Our chapter first glances at the usual prefatory particulars of the age, pedigree, length of reign, kind of character, and choice between virtue and vice of the new king (vers. 1—5; but note the remarkable appearance of ver. 2, looking as though it had strayed). Next, of his good works (vers. 6—15). Next, of his fall through most gratuitous "presumptuous sin," and its decisive crushing visitation of punishment (vers. 16—21). Lastly, of his death and burial (vers. 22, 23). The nine verses of the parallel instanced above answer respectively—21, 22 to our vers. 1, 2; 1—3, to our vers. 1, 3, 4; 5, to our ver. 21; and 6, 7, to our vers. 22, 23. That our chapter should abound in interest, and such solemn interest, awakens the more thought as to the causes of the absence of so much of its most interesting matter in the Book of Kings.

Ver. 1.—Uzziah; Hebrew, עֻזִּיָּה (signifying "Strength of Jehovah"). Once in Chronicles, and once only (1 Chron. iii. 12), this king's name is given *Azariah*, Hebrew, עֲזַרְיָה (signifying "Help of Jehovah") or עֲזַרְיָהוּ; and Isaiah (i. 1, etc.), Hosea (i. 1, etc.), and Amos (i. 1, etc.) always use the word *Uzziah*. In the parallel, however, and in both the chapters in which the parallel clauses lie, the word *Azariah* is used, as well in other clauses as in those (*e.g.* 2 Kings xv. 1, 6, 8, 23, 27), yet *Uzziah* is also used in verses intermingled with them (*e.g.* 13, 30, 32, 34). It is probable that Azariah was the first-used name, that the latter name was not a corruption of the former, but that, for whatever reason, the king was called by both names. Nevertheless, the apt analogy that has been pointed out of Uzziel (1 Chron. xxv. 4) and Azareel (18) is noteworthy. (See Keil and Bertheau on 1 Kings xv. 2 and 2 Kings xiv. 21; and Keil on our present passage.) **Sixteen years old.** Therefore Uzziah must have been born just before the fatal outside mistake of his father's life in the challenge he sent to Joash of Israel, and after the deadly inner mistake of his soul in turning aside to "the gods of the children of Seir."

Ver. 2.—Eloth; Hebrew, אֶת־אֵילוֹת; the parallel reads אֵילַת. This place was at the head of the Gulf Akaba (ch. viii. 17; 1 Kings ix. 26); Judah had lost hold of it at a past revolt of Edom, and Uzziah, after his father's crippling of Edom, seizes the opportunity of making it Judah's again and rebuilding it, thus finishing very probably a work that he knew had been in his father's heart to do. This consideration may explain alike the following clause in our verse, and the placing of this *here*. Uzziah charged himself to do it the first thing.

Ver. 3.—Jecoliah. This name is spelt *Jecholiah* in the parallel. The character, however, is *kappa* in both texts. The meaning of the name is, "Made strong of Jehovah." Another unreliable form of the name is *Jekiliah*, the result probably of a mere clerical error.

Ver. 4.—Right . . . according to . . . his father. His father's comparatively long reign, sullied by two frightful stains, which were fearfully visited with a long punishment and a fatal end, is graciously recognized here for the good that was in it, and apparently credited even with a "balance to the good."

Ver. 5.—In the days of Zechariah. Twice in the foregoing chapter we have read of "a man of God" and "a prophet" whose names are not given. The chariness of the narrative in this exact respect is not very explicable, for if the simple reason be assumed to be that they were not of much repute, now when the name of *Zechariah* is given, all that we can say is that nothing else is known of him. **Had understanding;** Hebrew, הַמֵּבִין. There seems no reason to divest this hiph. conjugation form of its stricter signification, "*gave* understanding" (see Isa. xl. 14). **In the visions of God;** Hebrew, בִּרְאוֹת. Some slight discrepancy in the usual fuller writing of the word in some manuscripts lends a little ground of preference for the reading, which a few manuscripts evidently had (see Septuagint Version, ἐν φόβῳ), of בִּרְאַת; *i.e.* "in the fear of God" (Prov. i. 7; Isa. xi. 3); either reading in either of these sub-clauses leaves an undisturbed good meaning to the description of Zechariah.

Ver. 6.—The Philistines. It has been seen how the Philistines, humbled to tribute under Jehoshaphat (ch. xvii. 10—13), had lifted up their heads repeatedly since, as on one occasion in alliance with Arabians (ch. xxi. 16, 17) against Jehoram. **Brake down the wall** (see ch. xxv. 23, the first occasion of this exact expression). **Gath** (see the parallel to our ch. xxiv. 23, 24 in 2 Kings xii. 17). **Jabneh.** A city on the coast, north-west of Judah, now *Jebna* (see Josh. xv. 10—12). **Ashdod.** Also on the coast, about eight miles south of Jabneh (Josh. xv. 47). It is now a large village in Philistia, called *Esdûd*, answering to the Azotus of Acts viii. 40 (see Topographical Index to Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible;' and Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' *sub voc.*, i. 113). **Built cities about Ashdod**; Revised Version supplies in italic type "*in the country* of Ashdod." However, the force of the preposition בְּ before "Ashdod" in this case speaks for itself; on account of the great importance of the place, in respect of its situation, on the road to Egypt, the strength of its position and perhaps the memory of the fact that, allotted to Judah, it had never really been appropriated by her, and incorporated with her, Uzziah saw it expedient to surround it with other fortified cities, or strong forts, which should be a watch *upon* it.

Ver. 7.—**Gur-baal.** Though nothing is known of this place (the meaning of which is "abode of Baal," perhaps from some temple of Baal), yet its companion Maon, the city of the Mehunim (ch. xxii. 1; Judg. x. 12), shows whereabouts it was.

Ver. 8.—**The Ammonites.** This nation lay east of Jordan, north-east of Moab. Note the interesting references, Numb. xxi. 24; Deut. ii. 37. **Gave gifts.** This expression was found in our ch. xvii. 11; 1 Kings iv. 21; x. 25. The reference to *tribute-payment* is evident. **The entering in of Egypt.** This, of course, marks the breadth of the land, and describes the breadth of Uzziah's sway or influence.

Ver. 9.—**Built towers in Jerusalem.** The excellent map, above alluded to (ch. xxv. 23), in Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible' (2nd edit.), facing p. 334, furnishes a very clear idea alike of these towers and of the walls of Jerusalem, as we can make them out, for Uzziah's times. For the corner gate, see our note, ch. xxv. 23. **Valley gate.** This is called by some the Gehenna gate. As many as three sites, reducible perhaps to two, are proposed for this gate: (1) the west gate, called somewhile the "Jaffa" gate; or (2) a gate over the valley of "Hinnom;" or, if it be not the same, (3) that at the valley of Tyropœon. **And at the turning**; Hebrew, הַמִּקְצוֹעַ. This word occurs eleven times, viz. twice in Exodus, four times in Nehemiah, four times in Ezekiel, and in this place, and is always rendered "corner" or "turning;" the word wanted is *angle*. The site of this gate cannot very certainly be pronounced upon. Perhaps the angle that marks the gate is that at the south-east corner of the temple plateau. The language of Neh. iii. 19 is our best clue: "Next to him Ezer repaired . . . a piece over against the going up to the armoury *at the turning*."

Ver. 10.—**Towers in the desert**; Hebrew, בַּמִּדְבָּר; the rendering should be the usual one of "wilderness." This was the cattle-pasture west and south-west of the Dead Sea The towers were needed for forts of observation against marauding and cattle-robbing incursions, as well as for shelter in some attacks. **Many wells**; Hebrew, בֹּרוֹת. These were not *springs*, but rather, as in the margin, tanks and cisterns. **Carmel.** It is not probable that this is the proper name. The translation of Carmel is "fertile field." As a proper name it occurs about twenty times, from Josh. xii. 22; xv. 55; xix. 26; on to Amos i. 2; ix. 3; and perhaps Micah vii. 14; and as not a proper name it occurs about twenty times also; the "fruitful field," *e.g.*, of Isa. xxix. 17 and xxxii. 15 shows in the Hebrew text הַכַּרְמֶל. The aspect of this verse is very picturesque, and the picturesqueness very pleasant, with its low country and pasturing cattle, its plains and their herds, its hills and their vines, all quickened into life by the mention of towers and wells, husbandmen and vine-dressers, and finished off by the home-touch that this king's partiality looked to agricultural and pastoral pursuits.

Ver. 11.—**That went out to war by bands**; Hebrew, יֹצְאֵי צָבָא לִגְדוּד. The last of these words occurs thirty-three times, and is rendered "troop" ten times, "company" four times, "band" fourteen times, and (too generically) "army" five times. The middle word occurs above four hundred times, is rendered "host" an immense preponderance of these times, and probably should have been so rendered without exception. The first word is the poel participle kal of the familiar verb יָצָא, and compels the translation (given literally) "the goers out of the host by bands." Meantime, if the persons here spoken of were *leaders*, as seems possible, the hiph. participle is required (which would postulate an initial *mem* for the present initial *yod*), and a most typical example among some thirty others essentially similar may be quoted from Isa. xl. 26. **Their account by the hand of Jeiel**; *i.e.* their *muster tabulated by Jeiel*, whose office is mentioned before in our ch. xxv. 11. **Under the hand of Hananiah.** That is, Hananiah was head of the whole matter of the registering, etc.

Ver. 12.—**Of the mighty men of valour.** The "of" here is incorrect; the former substantive is not necessarily in *construct state*, and this word has the prefix of the preposition לְ; nor is the rendering "valour" for our Hebrew text חַיִל so likely a rendering as that found in the foregoing verse, "host." Render, *The whole number of the chief of the fathers in the mighty men of the host was*, etc. So in the next verse, "with mighty power" will be better rendered "with the strength of a host."

Ver. 13.—An army; Hebrew, חֵיל צָבָא. "A force of host" would render this expression, though by an ambiguous use of the word חֵיל, *construct* state of חַיִל. *This* verse gives the number of the body of the army proper, which shows it seven thousand five hundred more than that of Amaziah in the foregoing chapter (ver. 5).

Ver. 14.—Habergeons . . . slings to cast stones. Revised Version right in rendering, *coats of mail . . . and stones for slinging.* On the Israelites' employment of the sling, note Judg. xx. 16; 1 Sam. xvii. 40; 2 Kings iii. 25.

Ver. 15.—Engines; Hebrew, חִשְּׁבֹנוֹת; used only here and Eccles. vii. 29 (where it is rendered "inventions"), but the related word חֶשְׁבּוֹן is found three times: Eccles. vii. 25 (the "reason"), 27 (the "account"); ix. 10 ("device"); while the verb root חָשַׁב, to "devise," occurs about a hundred and thirty times, as in next sub-clause מַחֲשֶׁבֶת חוֹשֵׁב. A strict rendering of the clause would make it read, "He made inventions, the inventing of an inventive man;" and the force of the words might be to appraise very highly the virtue of the invention or machine, while to himself may have been due the credit thereof. The *balista* which discharged *stones* is depicted on Assyrian sculptures; not so the machine for discharging darts and arrows, the *catapult.* Although, as just suggested, it were conceivable that to Uzziah himself was due in part the invention or the great improving of the machines in question, yet the verse may be regarded as simply saying that the *introduction* of them into Jerusalem was his work. **He was marvellously helped** (see ver. 7).

Ver. 16.—To (his) destruction; Hebrew, עַד־לְהַשְׁחִית, hiph. conjugation infin. of שָׁחַת. This conjugation frequently occurs in the sense of "destroying," but also as well without an accusative as with, in the sense of "doing corruptly" (Gen. vi. 12 with accusative; but without Deut. iv. 16; xxxi. 29; Judg. ii. 19; Isa. i. 19; and next chapter, ver. 2). **He transgressed.** The "transgression" of a heart that had waxed wanton through prosperity took that peculiarly aggravated form of sinning against holy things and a holy ceremonial. Although, in the daily service of the second temple, the duty of offering incense attached to one chosen by lot each morning and evening of the inferior priests, yet originally the *high* priest was solemnly appointed for this office. The following are among the most important references to the matter of the incense and its offering (Exod. xxv. 6; xxx. 1, 7, 8, 34, 37, 38; Lev. xvi. 13; Luke i. 21; Numb. vi. 24—26; xvi. 1—35; xviii. 1—7; 1 Kings iv. 20).

Ver. 17.—Azariah the priest. Ver. 20 states what was otherwise to be supposed, that he was the chief priest (הָרֹאשׁ). We fail to identify his name with any in the typical list of 1 Chron. vi. 4—15, where the Azariah of ver. 11 is too early, and the Azariah of ver. 13 too late, for our present Azariah. **With him fourscore priests.** This passage suggests to us an idea of how many deeply interesting details are wanting, which would fill in the interstices of Old Testament history. Probably the intention of the king, ambitious to simulate the self-assumed religious ways of neighbouring Gentile kings, was no secret; and possibly the king may have given time for the chief priest to collect his auxiliaries, through some ostentatious display on his own part, in the very performance of his desecration. The number and the character of these helping priests (בְּנֵי־חָיִל) give the idea that they had their work to do, and purposed doing it promptly, or that they would over-awe, and obviate the use of actual force, by their imposing number.

Ver. 18.—They withstood. A somewhat more forcible rendering would be justified by the Hebrew text, such *e.g.* as, "They confronted Uzziah to his face," or "They stood in the way of Uzziah," since our "withstood" almost always conveys the idea of argumentative confronting only. There was expostulation here, as we are immediately told, but there was something else also, as ver. 20 makes very plain, "They thrust him out."

Ver. 19.—Render, *Then Uzziah was wrath, and in his hand* (at that moment) *was a censer to burn incense*, etc. From the most literal rendering of the Hebrew text, not unfrequently the most forcible Bible English results. **From beside**; render, *at the very side of* (comp. Numb. xii. 10; 2 Kings v. 27).

Ver. 20.—They thrust him out. This hiph. conjugation of kal בָּהַל does not point to the force adopted, but to the *trembling anxiety* with which, for horror's sake of such a monstrous catastrophe, as a leper by the altar and with a censer in his hand, etc., the priests urged him out. Evidently, from the next clause, no great force in the ordinary sense was needed. Yea, himself hasted. The Hebrew verb is niph. conjugation of דָּחַף. It is interesting to note that this root occurs only here and three times in Esther, viz. iii. 15; vi. 12; viii. 14. Uzziah can scarcely have been ignorant that he had been daring the utmost penalty of the Law (Numb. xvi. 31, 35; xviii. 7).

Ver. 21.—And dwelt in a several house. The Hebrew for "several house" is חָפְשׁוּת: the parallel (2 Kings xv. 5) showing *yod* instead of *vau* in the last syllable. The verbal root is חָפַשׁ, and occurs *once* (Lev. xix. 20, with the Authorized Version rendering "was free;" in the same verse is also found a feminine noun derived from it, and rendered in the Authorized Version "freedom"). The adjective חָפְשִׁי occurs sixteen times, and is always rendered in the Authorized Version "free," except once "at liberty" (Jer. xxxiv. 16). The "freedom" conveyed by the word is that of *separation*, in the use of it as found here. The leper and the house in which he lived were kept free from contact with others (Lev. xiii. 46). Gesenius appears, however, to prefer the idea of "infirmity," "sickness," as determining the cast of the meaning of the word in our text, and goes so far as to translate it an "hospital," quoting the word of Suidas, *τὸ νοσοκομεῖον*.

Ver. 22.—Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah the prophet asserts that his prophetic inspiration was in Uzziah's time (Isa. i. 1; vi. 1), or we should have taken for granted that, as he was alive in the time of Hezekiah, grandson to Uzziah, he wrote of Uzziah only from hearsay and previous records. It must be concluded, accordingly, that Isaiah's inspiration as a prophet was early in his own life, that the beginning of it dated not long before the end of Uzziah's career, and that his life was a prolonged one, while still the most part of the acts first and last of Uzziah, which he wrote, must have consisted of a compilation from other treatises and perhaps partly from tradition.

Ver. 23.—In the field of the burial which belonged to the kings. The parallel simply says, "with his fathers in the city of David." Judging, however, both from the somewhat remarkable words in our text, "the field of the burial" (*i.e.* the burial-field), and from the following clause, for they said, He is a leper, we may understand that, though it was in the "city of David" that he was buried, and "with his fathers" so far forth, and also that he lay *near* them, yet his actual sepulchre was not one with theirs, any more than his house of late had been one with the house he had known so well (see Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 341).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—23.—*The reign of fifty-two years spoiled in an hour.* Many a reign, indeed, was a spoiled reign which had begun well, promised well, and continued well for some length of time. But the reign of Uzziah, of all the reigns of Judah and of Israel the longest with the one exception of that of Manasseh, and particularly full of prosperity, and remarkably varied prosperity within, of success in just foreign wars, and of that which led to these things, viz. the most gracious tokens of the Divine approval and help—was all to be wrecked in an hour apparently, so far as King Uzziah was concerned. His people, indeed, were not stricken for his sin. Nor were his priests, whose loyal fidelity to their high office and sacred charge and whose faithful courage shone out to great advantage; but for the king himself, whenever his defection occurred, all the harvest of many years of a well-spent and hitherto glorious reign was "blown quite away" by—surely only such it can have been—"one cunning bosom sin"! The preacher may fix close and detailed attention on—

I. THE VARIED BENEFICENCE AND SUCCESS OF MANY YEARS OF UZZIAH'S REIGN. All this left little to Uzziah to desire, and little to be desired *for* him. They should have paved the way for an honourable, peaceful, restful old age, with the blessings of a nation and a nation's God upon him.

II. THE PLACE IN THE KING WHERE THIS SIN LODGED. It was not a sin of the world, nor a sin of the flesh, and though undoubtedly it was a sin of the devil, it must rather be written, *the* sin of the devil. It was akin to the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numb. xvi. 1—35). It was akin to the turning sin of the life of the first king, Saul. It was, we may perhaps say, akin to the sin of those "angels who lost their first estate." It was a sin particularly legislated against (Numb. xviii. 1—7). It is one, probably in our own days, and through all Christendom's past ages of history, more largely at work and more malignant, and of more dire disaster to priests even and people, than may be generally imagined. It harbours itself, not in the flesh, and not in the heart, but in the *spirit*. It is ambition ecclesiastical, and *unbridled!* It is a *snatching* at spiritual function, domination, and claim of authority, *unauthorized!* It is a zeal of self-exaltation and self-display, where self's very vesture should be the vesture of purity and of obedience! With Uzziah it was *technical* sacrilege. It none the less surely covered real sacrilege, which his spirit desired, sought, and defiantly dared. The opportunity here may be well utilized by the preacher for dwelling on and explaining the scripturally described triple designation of human nature, "body, soul, and spirit."

III. The cunningness and subtleness of this sin of the spirit. We do not, indeed, know the birth of this sin in Uzziah at all—when it was, what favoured it, when or how it peeped out first to view. Though it seems, as we read it, as though it were absolutely the evil suggestion of an hour in Uzziah, yet the preparation so easily matured by Azariah, when he followed "into the temple after Uzziah, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, valiant men," seems to indicate that these true ministers of the temple were to some degree forewarned and apprised of what was going to be attempted. The *cunningness* was that this particular disposition and impulse to sin had lain dormant for many a year of useful, good, and perhaps holy work. And the *subtleness* of it ranges with the truth that higher intellects and higher intelligences are exposed to higher, finer, and more refined forms of temptation, *the highest to the highest.* Let men say what they will in derogation and superficial disparagement of the inviolable sacredness of the offices and services and sacraments of the Church—differencing them from the older typical dispensation, when they differ not at all, except in demand of higher reverence and more spiritual unfeigned observance—it is *indisputable* that the most solemn warnings of apostles and Epistles point in this same direction of protest against all the offspring and widespread family of sacrilege. It is, indeed, in and of the very genius of Christianity to hallow intentions, vows, determinations, and works of religion with a sacredness *all their own.* The rush and rage of modern national life may overwhelm and sweep away many an old and many a sacred boundary, but the might is not the right. And the might that *seems* to usurp successfully, as Uzziah's was *not* given to do, is inflicting only the deadlier blow and more inly wound.

IV. The condign punishment of Uzziah. The disease of leprosy meant, marked, sin's last, typical chastisement for the body. And sin's last daring attempt of the spirit is stricken down with this loathsome stroke and scourge. It *made* the sinner hasten away to make if he could his escape; it makes the sinner loathe himself; it is the dread earnest of his shut-off, "let-alone," solitary condemnation. And one thing only—the blood of Jesus Christ—has efficacy to cleanse that leper. Though the principle cannot safely be *applied* either by Job's comforters or any modern successors of them, yet the nature and severity of a punishment roughly measure the significance of the sin, the steps of which it tracks. And Uzziah's sin and punishment, startling as they are in their own connection, have been also written as admonition that might be greatly needed as the wayward ages should flow onward, even to our own, and perhaps to the end.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Premature responsibility, etc.* In these verses we have a picture or a suggestion of—

I. Premature responsibility. "All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was *sixteen* years old, and made him king." They all agreed to set a lad upon the throne. Events seem to have justified their course; and if Zechariah the prophet, or, what is more likely, some prominent "prince of Judah," acted as prime minister or protector, he may have succeeded even in the earlier years of his administration. But it is a very great mistake to devolve large responsibilities upon the young. 1. It is bad for the estate they have to administer, whatever that may be. "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child," is a curse which has a wide application. The very young, with minds that must be immature, judge without knowledge, are swayed by persons rather than governed by principles, fall into serious and often into disastrous mistakes. 2. It is bad for themselves. It exposes them to several temptations which it is not right they should encounter, and it loads them with a weight of duty and difficulty they are not strong enough to carry. In most cases they break down, in some direction, under their burden. Responsibility is not for youth; it is for prime and for the ripe experience of later life.

II. THE INEQUALITIES OF CONDITION WHICH THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD ASSIGNS US. Uzziah "reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem." To him God gave more than half a century of power and wealth and their attendant advantages. To others he denies these larger gratifications altogether, and grants very limited comforts, and these for a very brief hour. How do we account for this? All is plain if we consider: 1. That neither justice nor kindness requires that God should give to one man as large a heritage as he has given to another; it is no injury to me to whom he has given one talent that it has pleased him to bestow ten talents on my neighbour. I had no claim to that one talent which, of his pure goodness, he has conferred upon me. 2. That the chief value of human life depends neither upon its surroundings nor upon its duration, but upon its moral and spiritual characteristics. 3. That if there be any inequalities that, in the cause of righteousness, require adjustment, there remains the long future for redress.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHERHOOD ON OUR CHARACTER AND OUR COURSE. It is not without meaning that we have the record, "his mother's name was Jecoliah." To much too large a degree in the East all that the mother contributes is maternity. But "woman, beloved of God in old Jerusalem," gave much more than this. She was not a cipher in the home; she was an intelligent, active sharer in the thought and history of her country and her time. Jesus Christ owed much to her truer appreciation, and to her more faithful ministry. It is likely that Uzziah owed as much to his mother as to his father in the way of godly training and good home influence. A very considerable number of the great and good men who have rendered conspicuous services to their race became what they were because they grew up in the atmosphere of a mother's gentle and beautiful life. "No mother knows who or what she has in her cradle," or can tell how great a share she may have, by the training of the little child that is slumbering there, in the enrichment or the reformation of the world.

IV. THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY ON OUR CHARACTER AND COURSE. "He sought God in the days of Zechariah" (ver. 5). No doubt this seeking of the Lord was very largely due to the prophet's influence over him. The true Christian minister is, like the Hebrew prophet, "one that speaks for God" to men. And he who speaks for his Divine Master with faithfulness, with earnestness of spirit, in true and pure affection, speaking "the whole counsel of God" as he is able to learn and utter it, has a work to do and an influence to exert second to none in the hearts and lives of men. From the court to the cottage-home the gracious power of such ministry is felt in the land.

V. THE PROSPERITY OF PIETY. "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (ver. 5). (See homily on ch. xxv. 15, "The folly of irreligion.") 1. There is no prosperity worthy of the name, or worthy of our ambition and pursuit, outside the fear and the favour of God. "Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?" Many have seemed to do so, and have imagined that they did. But, in the light of Divine wisdom, they have miserably failed. 2. There can be no failure in the faithful service of the Supreme. What looks like it, there may be, there often is; but not the thing itself. For he who walks with God, and is the friend of Jesus Christ, must *be* what is right and good; must *stand* where he is secure from harm; must be *witnessing* for the truth of God; must be *moving on* towards deeper wisdom, purer joy, and a glorious estate beyond.—C.

Ver. 5.—*Seeing God.* Zechariah "had understanding in the seeing of God" (marginal reading). In what way did the prophet, and in what respects may we now, have such special "understanding"?

I. THE PROPHETIC PRIVILEGE OF SEEING GOD. It might seem, at first sight, that there would be no degrees in such capacity. If God enabled a man to see him and to know his truth by granting him a vision, or by specially enlarging his natural faculty, it must be of no consequence (or of very little) what his individual capacities may be. But, thus reasoning, we should be wrong. God did not then, as he does not now, grant his Divine enlightenment independent of all human conditions. He had regard to: 1.

Purity and sanctity of character. 2. Natural intellectual faculty. 3. Special training. We cannot say that God never revealed his mind to any one who did not possess the first of these qualifications in a high degree. Remembering Balaam and Jonah, it would be impossible to maintain that view. Yet we may be quite sure that such men as Samuel and Elijah were preferred to others because of the elevation of their characters. Nor can we suppose that the second qualification was indispensable; but we may well believe that Balaam was employed as he was partly because he was a man of considerable intellectual endowment, and that Isaiah and Amos were among the "chosen" partly for the same reason. We know that there was special training for the work of prophecy, for there were "schools of the prophets" in the time of the judges. Whether Zechariah had one or all of these three advantages we do not know, but he was a man, on some such grounds, peculiarly adapted to receive communication from God, and, having received them, to deliver them.

II. THE FACULTY OF ALL SPIRITUAL MEN. We also, as those who stand among the multitude of godly men undistinguished by any office, may have "understanding in the seeing of God." What are its conditions? 1. *Docility of spirit.* If we would "enter the kingdom of God," *i.e.* if we would see God and know him as he desires to be seen and known by us as our forgiving Father, we must "become as little children" (Matt. xviii. 3; xix. 14). Much "understanding" in the way of human learning may, as in the case of the scribes and lawyers, keep us out of that atmosphere of docility without which we shall not learn of Christ, and shall not know God as we urgently need to know him (see 1 Cor. i. 26—29). It is the man that has come to understand his own spiritual ignorance and incapacity who will be willing to learn of God, and thus to "have understanding in the seeing of God." 2. *Purity of heart.* This, we know from the great Teacher himself, is an essential (Matt. v. 8). This purity of which Christ speaks includes: (1) Simplicity and sincerity of spirit; that which is not content with passing through fleshly rites, but desires to know God himself, to come into communion with him, to gain his loving favour. (2) A freedom from degrading affections; and therefore from debasing acts and associations—a heart that is not worn with selfish ambitions, or worried with corroding cares, or blemished by injurious excitements. (3) Consequent elevation of affection and aim—the love of Christ, the love of man, the earnest desire to be of service to our generation. 3. *Patient continuance* in well-being and in well-doing. To those who thus "continue in the grace of God" will be granted "eternal life." They who are faithful unto death shall wear "the crown of life" (see Rom. ii. 7; Rev. ii. 10). And we are sure that this life which is consummated beyond includes such a vision of God as we do not now enjoy, even when it is most true that "the eyes of our understanding are opened," and even when we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Then, with purer heart than we now possess, and with a holiness (Heb. xii. 14) to which we do not now attain, we shall "have understanding [and experience] in the seeing of God." Surely every one that hath *this* hope in him will "purify himself, even as Christ the Lord is pure."—C.

Vers. 6—15.—*A victorious career.* Perhaps it is not well understood that Uzziah was one of the strongest of the kings of Judah, and ran a remarkably successful course. Had not his sun set in some dark clouds, his name and fame would probably have stood far higher than they do. But when we have made necessary allowances, there remains before our eyes the picture of—

I. A VICTORIOUS CAREER. This, whether we have regard to: 1. The extension of his kingdom; he prevailed against the Edomites, the Philistines, the Arabians (vers. 2, 6—8). Or to: 2. The strengthening of his kingdom by military means—by building fortifications (vers. 9, 10), by ordering and equipping his army (vers. 11—13), by inventing or adopting the latest weapons of warfare (vers. 14, 15). Or to: 3. His attention to the national produce. It speaks very highly indeed for a monarch of that period that he dug wells, that he had much cattle, that he encouraged the vine-dressers, that he "loved husbandry." These are things which in that age of the world were too often disregarded and even despised by men in high places, especially by monarchs. But it was on such things as these that national prosperity very largely rested. Much of the power of a country comes from its wealth; and its wealth comes from the soil.

No wise ruler will be indifferent to the question of the produce of the land. The king that "loves husbandry" is, other things being present, a king that loves his people, and rules for the happiness of their homes. It is probable that Judah never spent so contented and prosperous a half-century as during the long reign of Uzziah.

II. ITS EXPLANATION. (1) It was partly due to the fact that he came under good human influence; that of his father in his better days, that of Zechariah all through that prophet's life; (perhaps) that of a godly mother. (2) It was due in part to his own capacity and energy. Had he been a weak prince, giving way to base flatteries and to corrupt companionship, he could not have played the admirable part he did. (3) It was due, chiefly and primarily, to the favour of Jehovah. "God made him to prosper" (ver. 5). From the Divine resources came intelligence, strength, sagacity, statesmanship. He might well have said, "Thou art the glory of my strength, and in thy favour has my horn been exalted." This is the explanation of every victorious career. 1. There goes toward it *individual character and energy*. Every man must "bear his own burden," and "have rejoicing in himself alone" (Gal. vi. 4, 5). In some sense and to some degree we must all "fight the good fight" for ourselves, if we would gain the victory and win "the prize of our high calling." 2. There is included in it *helpful influence from without;* all kindly human help from the home and from the sanctuary, from the father and from the friend. 3. The all-decisive force is the *power that works from above* on our behalf. God must make us to prosper if we are to gain the victory in the great strife of life. From him must come the guidance and the guardianship, the inspiration and the control, without which we shall faint and fall. And this is to be secured by (1) submission to the gracious sway, and (2) living in the holy service of a Divine Saviour.—C.

Vers. 16—21.—*A clouded close.* We could have wished that the end of Uzziah's life had answered to the beginning; that a reign which began so well, which had so commendable and even distinguished a record, had closed in light and honour. But it was not to be. That powerful temptation which assails the strong and the victorious proved too powerful for the Hebrew king; he fell beneath its force, and he paid a heavy penalty for his fall. We have—

I. A PAINFUL SPECTACLE in the person of a leprous king. In Uzziah the leper we have one who occupied the highest place in the kingdom brought to an estate which the meanest subject in the realm, who had the hue of health in his cheeks, would not have accepted in place of his own; we have one in whose presence it was once an honour to stand, and whose face it was a high privilege to behold, reduced to such a condition that it was a kindness for any one to be with him, a pain for any eye to regard him, a sacrifice and defilement for any one to touch him; we have a man whose presence once brought highest honour to the home the threshold of which he might condescend to cross, now brought so low that no humblest householder in the land could or would permit him to pass his door; we have a man who did stand foremost in every religious privilege, debarred from entering the outer court of the sanctuary; we have one who had spent his manly energies in all forms of happy and useful activity, shut up in a separate house and secluded from affairs; we have an instance of complete humiliation, and we cannot fail to be affected by it if we dwell upon all that it meant to the unhappy subject of it.

II. AN APPARENTLY HEAVY SENTENCE FOR ONE OFFENCE. We inquire—Why this terrible visitation? And we find that it was because the king invaded the temple of God and attempted to do that which was not permitted by law. To any one judging superficially, the sentence may seem severe and indeed excessive. It may seem unjust to visit one day's wrong-doing, one act of guilt, with a heavy penalty for life—a penalty that disabled and disqualified, as leprosy did, for all the duties and all the enjoyments of human life. But we have not to look far to find—

III. THE EXPLANATION OF THE SEVERITY. This is twofold. 1. It was of the first importance that the royal power should not presume upon ecclesiastical functions. It was not a mere question between king and priest; that would have been small enough. It was a question whether God should continue to rule, through his chosen officers, over the nation, or whether the king should set aside the divinely given Law, and practically make himself supreme. To defy and disobey one of the clearest and one of the most emphatic precepts in the Law, and to assume a prerogative which God had strictly confined to the priestly order, was a step that was revolutionary in its character and tendency, that was calculated to overturn the most sacred traditions, and to break up the ancient usage as well as to lessen that sense of the Divine separateness and sanctity which it was the first object of the great Lawgiver to fasten on the mind of the people. It was a daring and a dangerous innovation, which nothing but overgrown presumption would have attempted, and which demanded the most striking and impressive rebuke that could be administered. The sentence was *judicial*, and was intended to warn all others from acts that were injurious, and from an ambition that was unholy. 2. It was the punishment, not merely of one sinful action, but also of *a guilty state of heart.* Uzziah would not have done this sacrilegious action if he had not fallen from the humility, which is the first condition of true piety, into a state of condemnable spiritual pride. "His heart was lifted up;" "his heart was haughty, and his eyes were lofty," and therefore he wanted to "exercise himself in things too high for him" (Ps. cxxxi. 1). Much success had spoiled him, as it spoils so many in every land and Church. It had made him arrogant, and human arrogance is a moral evil of the first magnitude, displeasing in a very high degree to the Holy One of Israel, utterly unbecoming in any one of the children of men, exposing the soul to other sins, requiring a strong and sometimes even a stern discipline that it may be uprooted from the heart and life. It may be hoped, and perhaps believed, that in the "several house" (ver. 21) in which Uzziah afterwards lived, he learned the lesson which God designed to teach him, humbled his heart before his Maker, and came to bless that pruning hand which dealt so severe a stroke to save the vine from fruitlessness and death. 1. Shrink from intruding where God does not call you. But, more particularly: 2. Recognize the fact that success in any sphere is a "slippery place," and calls for much self-examination and much earnest prayer for humility and simplicity of spirit.—C.

Vers. 1—15.—*Uzziah the prosperous.* I. A YOUTHFUL SOVEREIGN. (Vers. 1—3.) 1. *His names.* Uzziah, "Might of Jehovah" (2 Kings xv. 13, 30, 32, 34; Isa. i. 1; vi. 1; Amos i. 1; Zech. xiv. 5); Azariah, "Whom Jehovah aids" (2 Kings xiv. 21; xv. 1, 6, 8, 17, 23, 27; 1 Chron. iii. 12);—the former, the designation taken by or conferred upon him at or soon after his accession (Thenius, Bähr); the latter, his name before that event. But if the two appellations should not be regarded as equivalent (Keil), the likelihood is that Uzziah was his personal and Azariah his kingly title (Nägelsbach in Herzog, and Kleinert in Riehm), as the latter, *Azri-jahu*, is the name he ordinarily bears on the Assyrian monuments (Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 217). 2. *His parents.* Amaziah the son of Joash, and Jecoliah of Jerusalem. Of the latter nothing is known beyond her name and residence, except that she had been the wife, and was the mother, of a king. That Uzziah was not his father's firstborn son has been inferred (Bertheau, Ewald, Bähr), though precariously, from the statement that "all the people took him and made him king" (ver. 1). 3. *The date of his accession.* After his father's death, in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam II. of Israel (2 Kings xiv. 23). The theory that Uzziah's accession should be dated from his father's capture by Joash (Sumner) is not without support from certain circumstances stated in the narrative, as *e.g.* that Amaziah *lived* (not reigned) after the death of Joash fifteen years (ch. xxv. 25), and that Uzziah built Eloth after the death of his father (ch. xxvi. 2), as if he had been sovereign before that event. Nevertheless, it *is* not adopted by Josephus ('Ant.,' ix. 9. 3), and does not appear demanded by the text (consult Exposition). 4. *The length of his reign.* Fifty-two years—with one exception (ch. xxxiii. 1) the longest throne-occupancy of any sovereign of Judah. Its close synchronized with the accession of Pekah to the throne of Israel by means of conspiracy and assassination (2 Kings xv. 23—25).

II. A PROMISING RULER. (Vers. 4, 5.) 1. *A worshipper of Jehovah.* "He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done," *i.e.* until he declined into idolatry (ch. xxv. 14). "He was a good man, and by nature righteous and magnanimous, and very laborious in taking care of the affairs of his kingdom" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' ix. 10. 3); but his devotion to religion, while sincere, was, like his father's, imperfect (ch. xxv. 2). "The high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places" (2 Kings xv. 4). See the confirmation of this in the minor prophets (Hos. viii. 14; xii. 2; Amos ii. 4). 2. *A seeker after God.* "And he sought God." (1) How? By observing his worship, keeping his commandments, honouring his prophets, and studying his Law—the only true way of seeking God still. (2) When? In the days of Zechariah, "who had understanding," or "gave instruction" (Revised Version, margin), "in the vision of God." Nobler distinction than the former, better employment than the latter, can no man have. (3) How long? Until Zechariah died, after which his fervour declined, the remembrance of his teacher faded, his devotion to Jehovah and the true religion diminished. So Joash behaved wisely and religiously while Jehoiada lived (ch. xxiv. 17). Human goodness too often short-lived (Hos. vi. 4). (4) With what result? Prosperity, which kept pace with his piety. "As long as he sought Jehovah, Elohim made him to prosper" (ver. 5)—a remarkable combination of words, which perhaps teaches that, whilst prosperity or success is from God, the Supreme Being as such, it is never conferred upon good men except on the ground that they are worshippers of him as the covenant God of grace and salvation. 3. *A pupil of Zechariah.* "Zechariah had understanding," and perhaps gave him instruction "in the vision [or, 'seeing'] of God." That this Zechariah was neither the priest whom Joash slew (ch. xxiv. 20), nor the prophet who lived in the second year of Darius (Zech. i. 1), is apparent. That he possessed that special gift or capacity of beholding God in vision which pertained to the prophetic calling cannot be inferred from the Chronicler's statement, "since this beholding of God, of which the prophets were conscious only in moments of highest inspiration, cannot be thought of as a work of human activity and exercise" (Bertheau). Most probably he was one who, like Daniel (i. 17), "had understanding in all visions and dreams," and who acted as Uzziah's counsellor and teacher.

III. A BRILLIANT WARRIOR. (Vers. 2, 6, 7, 8.) 1. *The fortification of Eloth.* (Ver. 2.) His father's conquest of Edom (ch. xxv. 11, 12) had either not been pushed as far as this important harbour-town upon the Red Sea (see on ch. viii. 17), or the town, though taken, had been given up and not annexed to Judah in consequence of Joash's defeat of Amaziah (ch. xxv. 23). On attaining to the throne, Uzziah rectified his father's oversight by capturing the town, erecting it into a fortress, and restoring it to Judah. Without it Edom was of little consequence to Judah. This exploit, which happened in the early part of Uzziah's reign, was probably that from which he derived his name Azariah (2 Kings xiv. 21, 22); while its introduction at this stage in the narrative, before the chronological statement which follows it (ver. 3), may have been due to a desire on the part of the Chronicler to introduce Uzziah to his readers as the well-known monarch who had conquered, recovered, and fortified Eloth (Bertheau). 2. *The war against the Philistines and Arabians.* (Vers. 6, 7.) These had together invaded Judah upwards of eighty years previously (ch. xxi. 16), and Uzziah may have purposed to inflict upon them chastisement for that aggression (Keil); but the assumption is as rational that Uzziah either dreaded or experienced a combination against himself similar to that which had assailed Jehoram, and that, either (in the former case) taking time by the forelock, he fell upon his enemies ere they could strike at him, or (in the latter case), meeting the emergency with courage, he repelled the attacks they made upon him. His success in dealing with the Philistines was complete. He broke down the walls of Gath (see on ch. xi. 8), which, formerly taken from the Philistines by David (1 Chron. xviii. 1), had latterly been recovered, most likely in the reign of Jehoram; the wall of Jabneh, here mentioned for the first time, but probably the town in Judah named Jabneel in the days of the conquest (Josh. xv. 11), Jamnia in the period of the Maccabees, at the present day Jabneh, eighteen miles north-west of Gath, "situated on a slight eminence on the west bank of the valley of Sorek (*Wâdy es Sûrar*), about four miles from the sea coast" (Warren, in 'Picturesque Palestine,' iii. 161); and the wall of Ashdod, one of the principal cities of the Philistines (1 Sam. v. 1), and now a village called *Esdud*, after which he erected cities in the domain of Ashdod and in other parts of Philistia. In like manner, he was entirely victorious over the Arabians in Gur-baal—not the city Petra (LXX.), but perhaps the town of Gerar (Targum)—and the Meunims, who dwelt in Maan (1 Chron. iv. 41). 3. *The submission of the Ammonites.* These, whose settlements lay east of the Dead Sea, and who, in Jehoshaphat's time, had come up against Judah (ch. xx. 1), were now so reduced that they rendered tribute to Judah, as the Moabites did under David (2 Sam. viii. 2), and the Philistines and Arabians under Jehoshaphat (ch. xvii. 11). 4. *The extension of his fame to Egypt.* Not merely the report of his splendid victories travelled so far as the land of the Pharaohs, but the boundaries of his empire reached to its vicinity. An inscription of Tiglath-Pileser II. shows that the northern people of Hamath attempted to free themselves from the Assyrian yoke by going over to Azariah ('Records,' etc., v. 46; Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 221).

IV. A GREAT BUILDER. (Vers. 9, 10.) In addition to the fortress at Eloth and the cities in Philistia, he erected towers. 1. *In Jerusalem.* (1) At the corner-gate, *i.e.* at the north-west corner of the city (ch. xxv. 23). (2) At the valley-gate, *i.e.* on the west side, where the Jaffa gate now is. (3) At the turning of the wall, *i.e.* at a curve in the city wall on the east side of Zion, near the horse-gate. This tower commanded both the temple hill and Zion against attacks from the south-east. 2. *In the desert, or wilderness.* The place was "the steppe-lands on the west side of the Dead Sea" (Keil); the object, the protection of his flocks and shepherds against attacks from robber-bands, whether of Edomites or Arabians.

V. AN ENTHUSIASTIC HUSBANDMAN. (Ver. 10.) 1. *An extensive cattle-breeder.* He had much cattle in the region just mentioned, in the lowland between the mountains of Judæa and the Mediterranean, and in the flat district on the east of the Dead Sea, from Arnon to near Heshbon in the north. For the use of these animals he hewed cisterns in each of these localities. 2. *An ardent agriculturist.* He kept farmers and vine-dressers upon the mountains and in the fruitful fields. "He took care to cultivate the ground. He planted it with all sorts of plants, and sowed it with all sorts of seeds" (Josephus).

VI. AN ABLE GENERAL. (Vers. 11—15.) 1. *He organized the army.* (1) The number of fighting men was reckoned up by Hananiah, one of the king's captains, assisted by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the steward, two officials practised in writing and the making up of lists. The total force, according to their estimation, was 307,500 (370,000, Josephus) able-bodied and thoroughly disciplined troops, with 2600 (2000, Josephus) heads of fathers' houses, mighty men of valour, who acted as superior officers or divisional commanders. (2) The entire host was arranged into bands, detachments, or army corps, each father's house, perhaps, composing a regiment, and a group of these a battalion. (3) Whether these army corps served in rotation (Jamieson) is not stated. 2. *He armed the soldiers.* For all the host he prepared the necessary weapons for offensive and defensive warfare—for the first, spears, bows, and slings; for the second, shields, helmets, and coats of mail; or perhaps, for the heavy-armed troops, shields, spears, and helmets; and for the light infantry, bows and sling-stones. The mention of "sling-stones," it has been thought (Bertheau), was intended to indicate the completeness of his preparations, as in the late Franco-German war Marshal Lebœuf declared the French army to be ready for the projected campaign down to the "shoe-buckle." Besides furnishing each soldier with a set of weapons, Uzziah collected a store of such "that he might have them in readiness to put into the hands of his subjects on any exigency" (A. Clarke). 3. *He fortified the capital.* This, which Joash of Israel (ch. xxv. 23) had weakened, he strengthened by placing on the towers and battlements of its walls ingenious machines—"engines invented by cunning men"—to shoot arrows and great stones withal, like the *catapultæ* and *ballistæ* of the Romans.

LESSONS. 1. The beneficial influence of parental piety—it tends to reproduce itself in the children. 2. The true Source of all prosperity, whether temporal or spiritual—God. 3. The necessary condition of all permanent prosperity for individuals or communities—religion, seeking God. 4. The unspeakable advantage to kings and subjects of having as their counsellors men who have understanding in the visions of God. 5. The obvious wisdom of sovereigns and their people devoting attention to the cultivation of the soil. 6. The lawfulness, in nations as in individuals, of taking due precautions for safety.—W.

Vers. 16—23.—*Uzziah the leprous.* I UZZIAH'S TRANSGRESSION. (Vers. 16—19.) 1. *The cause of it.* (1) Pride. "His heart was lifted up." This the inevitable tendency of too much material and temporal prosperity (Deut. viii. 13, 14). Exemplified in Amaziah (ch. xxv. 18, 19; 2 Kings xiv. 9), Sennacherib (ch. xxxii. 31; 2 Kings xviii. 19—35), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30—34; v. 20). (2) Ignorance. He perceived not that his heart was being lifted up "to his destruction." Had he foreseen the consequences of his rash act, he might have paused. But questions of right and wrong must be determined without regard to temporal results. Only none need remain in ignorance of this, that the path of holiness is the path of safety (Prov. iii. 17), whatever be its external issues; and that the way of disobedience, however promising to appearance, is and must be the way of peril and doom (Prov. iv. 19). 2. *The nature of it.* "He went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense," *i.e.* he took upon himself the priestly function of ministering before Jehovah in the holy place. Whether in doing so he conceived himself to be following in the steps of David and Solomon (Thenius, Ewald, Stanley) may be doubted. It is not clear that either of these sovereigns ever offered incense in the sanctuary proper, though they frequently officiated at the offering of sacrifices in the outer court on the occasion of religious festivals (Bertheau, Keil, Bähr). More likely is the view that Uzziah desired to ape the potentates of the world generally, as *e.g.* those of Egypt (Harkness, 'Egyptian Life and History,' p. 44), who, as supreme priests (*pontifices maximi*), with other priests to aid them, conducted temple-worship in honour of the gods. In any case, what he did expressly violated the Divine Law, which reserved the privilege of entering the holy place and ministering therein exclusively for the priests (Exod. xxx. 7, 8; Lev. xvi. 2, 12, 13; Numb. xviii. 1—10). The statement of Josephus ('Ant.,' ix. 10. 4) may well be authentic, that the occasion which tempted Uzziah to forget himself was the celebration of some high national festival. 3. *The aggravations of it.* He committed this offence: (1) When he was strong; when his empire was at the height of its splendour, and himself at the top of his fame; when his kingly magnificence was in full bloom, and his regal heart had everything it could desire—in short, when he ought to have been supremely contented and happy, without aspiring after more. (2) Against that God through whose assistance he had climbed to the pedestal of earthly renown on which he stood, thereby furnishing a proof of monstrous ingratitude quite on a level with that of his father Amaziah (ch. xxv. 14). (3) In spite of the remonstrance of Azariah the priest and eighty colleagues, who, going into the sanctuary after him, courageously reminded him of the heinous character of his proposed action, as an invasion of the province Jehovah had set apart for the Aaronic priesthood, fearlessly commanded him to leave the sacred edifice, and warned him of the peril he incurred in thus defying the ordinance of God. Men who have God upon their side have no need to be afraid of kings. Nothing emboldens the human spirit like a consciousness of right (Ps. xxvii. 1). (4) With ebullitions of kingly rage. According to Josephus, he threatened to kill Azariah and his colleagues unless they held their peace (Prov. xix. 12; xvi. 14). Wrath often leads to murder.

II. UZZIAH'S PUNISHMENT. (Vers. 19—23.) 1. *Sudden.* The Lord smote him (2 Kings xv. 5) where he stood, within the holy place, censer in hand, attired in a priestly robe, fuming at Azariah and his eighty assistants, ready, in defiance of one and all, to go through with the unhallowed project he had in hand. Foolish Uzziah! Jehovah, who all the while was looking on (ch. vii. 16; Hab. ii. 20), simply stretched forth his invisible finger, and the daringly sacrilegious act was arrested. According to Josephus ('Ant.,' ix. 10. 4), at that moment a great earthquake shook the ground, splitting the mountain on which the city stood, and making in the temple dome a rent, through which the sun's rays, shining, fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized on him immediately (cf. Amos i. 1; Micah i. 4; Zech. xiv. 5). 2. *Severe.* The leprosy brake forth (or rose as the sun) in his forehead. (On the nature of this disease, consult the Exposition, and see Keil's 'Biblische Archäologie,' s. 114.) The same punishment inflicted on Miriam for speaking against Moses (Numb. xii. 10), and on Gehazi for lying to Elisha (2 Kings v. 27). The severity of the stroke measured the greatness of the sin for which it fell. 3. *Conspicuous.* "The chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous." The signs and tokens of this plague had been laid down in the Law of Moses (Lev. xiii.). Like the mark upon Cain's brow (Gen. iv. 15), the spot upon Uzziah's forehead proclaimed him an object of Divine wrath. Many suffer on account of their transgressions whose chastisement is not visible to their fellow-men; that Uzziah's was perceptible to Azariah and his colleagues was a proof of the heinous character of his offence, while it served as a warning to others. One of Jehovah's purposes in inflicting punishment on evil-doers is to convince beholders of the horrible iniquity of sin, and deter them through "the terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 11.) from its commission. 4. *Humiliating.* The priests thrust the stricken king from the sacred dwelling; yea, the king himself "hasted to go out." Moreover, he was henceforth as an unclean person, cut off from the congregation of Jehovah (Lev. xiii. 45, 46; Numb. v. 2), and, because of the infectious nature of his malady, lodged in a "several house," *i.e.* a lazar-house, or infirmary. As the leprosy, in its spreading, wasting, corrupting, loathsome, contagious, incurable character, was a hideous emblem of sin, so the exclusion of the leper from the congregation, and his isolation from the society of his fellows, was an impressive picture of the fate reserved for unpardoned sinners (Ps. i. 5, 6). It must not, however, be assumed that Uzziah died in impenitence. 5. *Fatal.* It ended in death, as all sin does (Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. vi. 23). Yet sin is not incurable by Divine power any more than leprosy was. As Miriam, Naaman, and the man who came to Christ (Matt. viii. 2) were cleansed, so may the sinful soul be renewed (1 John i. 7). 6. *Posthumous.* Uzziah's punishment followed him after death. His people buried him, indeed, but not in the royal mausoleum, only in its neighbourhood, in the field of burial which belonged to the kings, lest his leprous dust should defile that of his fathers.

LESSONS. 1. The danger of prosperity. 2. The sin of pride. 3. The unlawfulness of will-worship. 4. The certainty that God can punish sin. 5. The hopelessness of those who die in sin.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter of nine verses is paralleled by the seven verses of 2 Kings xv. 32—38. It consists of personal particulars respecting Jotham (vers. 1, 2); his building and his wars (vers. 3—6); a reference to his further doings (ver. 7); an exact repetition of a part of the first verse (ver. 8); his death, burial, and successor (ver. 9).

Ver. 1.—Jerushah. This name in the parallel is spelt with a final *aleph* instead of *he.* Nothing else is known of Jerushah, nor of her father Zadok.

Ver. 2.—Howbeit. This word purports to render the Hebrew רַק, which might find a more telling reproduction in such a phrase as "and moreover." It has been said, wherein his father did right, so did he; and to his clear advantage, where his father went wrong, he did *not.* **The people did yet corruptly.** The parallel, in its ver. 35, specifies in what this consisted, viz. that they continued the high places, burning incense and sacrificing at them. The early chapters of Isaiah depict forcibly the extent of this national apostasy, and the heinous offensiveness of it in the Divine sight.

Ver. 3.—The high gate. In the parallel, rendered in the Authorized Version the "higher" gate, the Hebrew (הָעֶלְיוֹן) being the same in both places. The Revised Version shows "upper gate" in both places. It was probably the gate which led from the palace to the temple's outer court (see ch. xxiii. 20, and note there). **On the wall of Ophel;** Hebrew, הָעֹפֶל; *i.e. the ophel,* which may be Englished "the swelling ground." It was the extreme south end of the spur which gradually narrowed southward, and which was the continuation of the *Besetha* hill, bounded by the brook Kedron on the east, and the Tyropœon on the west. This extreme south part called the Ophel sank into the bounding valleys to the Kedron precipitously and to the Tyropœon gradually. Pp. 328—335 of Conder's 'Handbook' (2nd edit.), and specially pp. 332—334, well repay a thorough study. A ditch was cut across the narrowest part of the ridge, which separated the temple hill itself from the Besetha hill. In these parts fortifications were built, and no doubt to such it is our text calls attention.

Ver. 4.—The mountains of Judah; Hebrew, בְּהַר; Revised Version, *hill country of Judah,* the Hebrew text being in the *singular* number (compare particularly Josh. ix. 1, where the *Har* is evidently placed in contrast with the *Shefelah*). **Castles;** Hebrew, בִּירָנִיּוֹת (so ch. xvii. 12). The meaning is that he built *forts* (Isa. ii. 15; Hos. viii. 14).

Ver. 5.—He fought . . . the King of the Ammonites. No allusion is made to the matter of this verse in the parallel, which contains a statement of the Syrian Rezin's attack or threatened invasion of Judah, as well as Pekah's, son of Remaliah King of Israel. Of the Ammonites' defeat by Uzziah we have just heard (foregoing chapter, ver. 8). A general statement is all that is made there of the gifts or tribute they then had to pay. The present tribute was a heavy payment, and enforced for three years. The "wheat" and "barley," in which payment was largely made bespeak the fertile arable quality of the Ammonite land, and this is noticed by travellers to the present day.

Ver. 6.—The virtue of the reflection of this verse is apparent. **Prepared**; Hebrew, הֵכִן; Revised Version, ***ordered;*** with some others (such as "set straight," etc.), a good rendering in keeping with other Old Testament renderings of words betokening *moral habitude.*

Ver. 7.—**All his wars** (see note on ver. 5, and parallel, ver. 37). **The book of the kings of Israel and Judah.** Note carefully the parallel, ver. 36, and also ver. 6 of same chapter, entries of *Judah* kings, and comp. vers. 11, 15, 21, 26, 31 of same chapter (2 Kings xv.), entries of *Israel* kings.

Ver. 8.—This verse is *identical* with so much of ver. 1 as has to do with same subject; that it is no mere careless repeated insertion, however, is evidenced by the name Jotham in that verse, in the place occupied by was in this verse.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The blameless reign of a son who followed all that was good in a father's example, and took warning of what was wrong in it.* The preacher may take occasion, from the apparently scant contents of this chapter, to enlarge on the general subject of example as a force in human life, pointing out its strong points and its weaker side; what is requisite to give it a steady and equable influence, and how there is only one perfect Example—an Example always and in all things and by all worthy to be followed. Point may be given to the subject, as based on this chapter, by observing how it reminds us that—

I. NO HUMAN EXAMPLE CAN BE WORTHY TO BE FOLLOWED AND COPIED IN EVERY RESPECT. The most filial son may not look to the wisest, kindest, and most religious father as an absolutely safe guide and model in everything; and so, through the whole range and operation of the relationships, and the influences in them for good even, which affect our character and are prone to dominate our life.

II. THE EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHOM WE BEST LOVE—OF GREAT MEN, OF THE SAINTLIEST-KNOWN CHARACTERS, OF THOSE WHOM WE DESERVEDLY ADMIRE AND VENERATE—MUST NOT BE MADE ANY SLAVISH MODEL, MUCH LESS PERVERTED INTO AN IDOLATROUS ONE. Nay, how very common it is, in such cases, to see that errors, defects, peculiarities, mannerisms, are what are copied first, while the weightier qualities and objects of imitation are overlooked! As if we imitate perfectly our human model, much is still wanting of Divine perfection, and which in our measure it is quite possible to incorporate; so, if we imitate slavishly, we are putting in what had better be left out, and are often caught putting it in, even at the expense of omitting the worthier things.

III. HUMAN EXAMPLE GIVES THE HELP OF WARMTH, SYMPATHY, AND AN ENCOURAGING INDUCEMENT TO ATTEMPT WHAT WE KNOW FROM IT THAT OTHERS HAVE DONE OR ATTAINED. It offers our thought and our moral nature a stepping-stone; it leads us on by the analogy to take the advantage of higher endeavour and of a higher model.

IV. FOR THE DISCRIMINATION ABSOLUTELY NEEDED, WHEN WE ARE FOLLOWING HUMAN EXAMPLES, SINCERE ENDEAVOUR, CONSCIENTIOUS THOUGHT, AND HUMBLE PRAYER WILL DO VERY MUCH TO FIT US. As in so much else these three moderating and directing forces reap God's blessing and gain safe practical results, so assuredly they will here, in what is a delicate grace to bloom and flourish in any circumstances, viz. that of discrimination. Jotham was made wise in this respect above many others, and his brief but very expressive and unique biography is therefore written without one single reproach or blot.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Uzziah and Jotham, father and son.* From the slight materials we have here, and those still more scanty in the Book of Kings, we may glean—

I. THAT THE BEST PART OF UZZIAH'S FORTUNE WAS IN HIS FATHERHOOD. He did, indeed, enjoy a very good estate; the "lines fell to him in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage." He had the highest position in the land, power, wealth, a large and noble sphere for great natural ability and honourable ambition (ch. xxvi. 6—15). But more precious than all of these to the king's heart, we may be sure, was the possession of a true, loyal, godly son and successor. That which touches us in our home affections either stirs within us the deepest and purest joy or awakens the profoundest and most poignant grief. An unworthy son, a "thankless child," an heir who is likely to overturn all that we have laboriously built up, will make the very sweetest enjoyments and the fairest earthly possessions to lose all their charm and be of no account to us. But such a son as Jotham is to his father the crown of prosperity and the comfort of adversity. From royal cares the king goes home to find, in conjugal and in filial affection, a contentment and a peace, an exhilaration and a joy, which no glittering gewgaws and no obsequious attentions are able to command. We do not know how highly Uzziah prized the virtue and the attachment of his son during his earlier and happier years, but we may be well assured that, when the hand of God was upon him, and he was separated from the society of men, he found in Jotham's regency and in his filial sympathy a priceless mitigation to his loss, an invaluable treasure in his loneliness and his decline. Parents may think that their professional or household duties make it impossible for them to afford time for the teaching and training of their children, for the culture of their Christian character; but they ought to know that, whatever their other claims may be, they *cannot afford to neglect* their parental duty. If they do neglect it, they will leave undone that which will make them immeasurably poorer than they might become a few years further on.

II. THAT THE BEST PART OF JOTHAM'S SUCCESSION WAS HIS FATHER'S CHARACTER. He inherited great things from his father, the king; but from his father, the servant of Jehovah, he gained one that outweighed them all—*the influence for good of a godly man.* He "did what was right . . . according to all that his father did." It was very largely, indeed, to his father's example that he owed his own character for piety and purity. And what is there in the most splendid surroundings, or in the most attractive positions, that is to be compared with that? *They* will perish, but *that* will endure; they will soon lose their charm, but it will always be precious beyond all price; they are relatively, but that is intrinsically and eternally, valuable. We may not have to thank our parents for a fortune or a dowry—it matters little; we may have to thank them for a bright and beautiful example—that matters *much*, indeed *everything*.

III. THAT JOTHAM LEARNT THE LESSON WHICH THE DIVINE FATHER TAUGHT. "Howbeit he entered not [profanely and intrusively] into the temple of the Lord." God rebuked his father, Uzziah, for this flagrant transgression, rebuking at the same time his pride of heart, his spiritual decline (see homily on ch. xxvi. 16—21, "A clouded close"). Doubtless Uzziah himself understood the meaning of that heavy blow, and bowed his heart beneath it; he "was in subjection to the Father of spirits, and lived." In that lingering death of leprosy he found life in penitence and in return to God. Jotham, his son, also learnt the lesson; and, instead of giving way to haughtiness of heart in the days when he was "mighty" (ver. 6), he retained his integrity before the Lord. 1. We may not plead our father's deficiencies, excesses, or disobediences as an excuse for our own. If they erred or sinned, they also suffered for their error, for their guilt. And their experience should be a warning which we should heed, and not an example which we foolishly follow. 2. We should give God heartfelt thanks for all the gracious influences which come to us in our home-life, and regard them as of the very best gifts that come from his Divine hand. 3. We should have it as a sacred and honourable ambition to confirm (and not to destroy) the work of those who went before us. If we do thus live, our fathers will be living on in us and through us, and if we cannot immortalize their name, we can perpetuate their influence. 4. We may hope that such filial devotedness will be rewarded by parental rejoicing in those whom we shall leave behind, to whom we shall commit the fruit of our labour.—C.

Vers. 1—9.—*Features of an honourable life: Jotham.* But little of Jotham's reign is recorded in Scripture, and his name is seldom on our lips. But he was a man of worth and wisdom; and, considering the comparative brevity of his life, we may say that he contributed much to his country. We learn from the account in the Second Book of Kings (xv. 5)—

I. THAT HE SERVED A USEFUL APPRENTICESHIP. We find that, for some time during his father's illness, he, "the king's son, was over the house, judging the people of the land." This was an admirable arrangement for the country and for the young prince; for it had the advantage (which the son could not fail to obtain) of the experience of

Uzziah; and he was learning the great art of ruling, while his responsibility was shared by one much wiser and stronger than he. It is an excellent thing for the young, in every sphere, to be placed where they can be gathering wisdom before they carry the heavy burden of a weighty responsibility.

II. THAT HE FOLLOWED IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF A WISE AND GOOD MAN. (Ver. 2.) (See previous homily on "Uzziah and Jotham, father and son.")

III. THAT HE WORKED IN A WISE DIRECTION—FROM WITHIN OUTWARD. First, "he built the high gate" of the temple (ver. 3); that was beginning at the very centre, at "the house of the Lord," which was morally, if not geographically, *the* central spot in the kingdom. Then he made some additions to the wall of Jerusalem (ver. 3). Then, moving outward, he built fortified cities in the mountains, and castles in the forests of Judah. And then, going further afield, he warred with Ammon, and compelled it to pay tribute (ver. 5). This is the true order. Let solicitude and activity begin at the centre; let them begin at the *very* centre—at a man's own heart and character; let them move outward—to those in the home circle, to the kindred, to the Church; and then to those still further away—to fellow-countrymen, to fellow-men everywhere. A circumscribed activity is altogether a mistake; but we must begin with ourselves, becoming right at heart, and then we may and should move outward in our sympathies and our endeavours.

IV. THAT HE ATTAINED GREAT POWER BY MAINTAINING HIS GODLY CHARACTER. (Ver. 6.) (See succeeding homily.)

V. THAT HIS LIFE WAS DARKENED BY MANY SHADOWS AS WELL AS BRIGHTENED BY MANY BLESSINGS. 1. He could not effect all the reforms he would have liked to carry out, and he had to witness some evil-doings which must have grieved his spirit. "The people did yet corruptly" (ver. 2). 2. Foreign invasion began to threaten the kingdom (1 Kings xv. 37). 3. He found himself sick unto death at an age (forty-one) when he might have expected to do great things, and to be much to the people whom he ruled. It was an honourable and useful life that Jotham lived; one to be remembered and to be followed in its salient features. Like him (1) we should see that we inherit that which is *the best* from our fathers; (2) pursue the right steadfastly, without swerving, even to the end; (3) beginning at home, we should extend our influence as far as we can send it; (4) be prepared to lay down our weapons in the midst of our days. And how much better to die, as Jotham did, leading all men to wish that he had lived longer, than, as so many others have done, compelling their best friends to wish that they had died sooner! It matters little when the night of death comes; but it matters much that, during the day of life, we do our work well and bear our burden with a brave and patient heart.—C.

Ver. 6.—*The accumulation of spiritual power.* "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God;" or, because "he made his ways firm before Jahveh." Whatever may be the exact rendering of the passage, and whatever may be the precise shade of thought intended to be conveyed, it is clear that Jotham's might or his strength in the kingdom is referred to his continuance in the service of the Lord. And thence we gain the truth that true power is to be sought and found in permanent piety, in walking with an unfaltering step in the ways of Divine wisdom and of human obedience. Power of the truest and highest kind is not the endowment of a moment; it is not a suddenly acquired possession; it is a growth, an accumulation; it is the "long result" of a faithful service. It is—

I. THE COMBINATION OF MANY CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. As the "mighty" swordsman is the man who is strong at all points of attack and defence; as the "mighty" speaker is he who has all possible qualifications for interesting, convincing, and persuading men; so the "mighty" man of God is he who has acquired all the various excellences which we are able to secure. "Giving all diligence," we are "to add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance," etc. (2 Pet. i. 5, 6). "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report," we are to think upon and, of course, to pursue and to acquire. We are to "build ourselves up on our holy faith." And building up is a work that is not done in a day nor in a year. It is a work of time. And the strong character thus formed is the accumulated result of many spiritual activities, protracted over many years.

II. THE WORK OF TIME IN MANY PARTICULARS. No man can be a mighty man, in a spiritual sense, who is not: 1. A large possessor of *Divine wisdom.* A superficial knowledge of Divine truth may serve for a while in simpler and subordinate positions; but he who occupies an important post, to which large responsibilities and delicate duties belong, must be furnished with a large measure of spiritual sagacity. And this can only be gained by serving the Lord for many years and in many ways. It is the acquisition of one whose "ways have been firm before Jehovah;" who has been living before God, and learning of him from year to year, from period to period. 2. A man of *much self-command.* A hasty or impulsive man is necessarily a weak man. Only those who can control themselves can command their fellows or direct affairs. Patience, self-possession, the ruling of our own spirit—this is an essential condition of all real strength; and this, again, is the work of long-continued struggle and discipline. It is the harvest of strenuous effort and of earnest prayer; it is a steady, spiritual accumulation. 3. One that has *acquired skill and strength* in exercise and activity. No man can do a thing really well till he has first done it imperfectly and tentatively. Excellency is always the fruit of practice, of patient, continuous endeavour. And here, again, is gradual acquisition or accumulation. 4. One that enjoys a *good measure of esteem.* It is the man of whom we say, "We know the proof of him;" the man who has approved himself in many a field of labour and in many a flood of trial; to whose words we listen, whose will we obey, whom we permit to guide and rule us. And, of all things, esteem is the product of consistency and beauty in life, of much walking "in the ways of Jehovah."

III. A GOAL TO BE PURSUED AND ATTAINED. It is true that power, or might, is, to some extent, an endowment; it is a direct gift of God. But it is far from being wholly so. In the kingdom, large or small, over which we are placed, we may "become mighty;" we may rise to influence; we may make our mark, which will not soon, if ever, be erased. (1) By a thorough consecration of ourselves to Jesus Christ and his cause; (2) by consistency and excellency—by blamelessness and beauty of life and spirit; (3) by earnestness of purpose and endeavour; (4) by prayer for Divine communications (Eph. iii. 16; Col. i. 11);—we also may "become mighty" to bear our witness, to overcome our foes, to do our work before we die.—C.

Vers. 1—9.—*A brief record of a bright reign.* I. JOTHAM, A GOOD MAN. 1. *Of honourable parentage.* (1) His father Uzziah, though guilty in his lifetime of a great sin (ch. xxvi. 16), and dying under a cloud (ch. xxvi. 21), was essentially a sincere worshipper of Jehovah. Good men may commit acts of wickedness, from the temporal consequences of which they cannot, in their lifetime, shake themselves free (*e.g.* Moses, Jacob, David); yet are their characters and standing before God not to be judged by these, but by the whole course of their earthly careers. (2) His mother Jerushah, a native of Jerusalem (Josephus, 'Ant.,' ix. 11. 2), and the daughter of Zadok—if this was the high priest mentioned in 1 Chron. vi. 53 (Bertheau)—was probably a woman of piety. Incalculable is the influence of mothers in determining the characters of sons (*e.g.* Jochebed, Eunice, Monica, Susanna Wesley). 2. *Of excellent character.* (1) He followed in his father's steps in so far as these were good (ver. 2), which was all he was warranted to do (Acts iv. 19). Religion doubly influential upon the young when recommended by the example of devout fathers and mothers. Who would make others good, himself must be good. Irreligious parents not likely to succeed in the godly upbringing of their children. (2) He avoided the mistake his father had committed (ver. 2). Mistakes of ourselves or others not actions to be repeated or patterns to be copied, but beacons to be observed and paths to be shunned. Whether, had Uzziah not been "stricken of the Lord," but permitted to assume the priest's office, Jotham would have discontinued the practice as an unwarrantable intrusion into a province that belonged not to kings, may be doubtful; it was to his credit that he was able to interpret the lesson of God's judgment on his parent, and meekly acquiesce in the same (Ps. cxix. 75, 120). (3) He persevered in the right way in spite of the sinful practices of his people. These "did corruptly" (ver. 2), *i.e.* worshipped idols, sacrificed, and burnt incense in the high places (2 Kings xv. 32); and if the representations of the prophets may be credited, were sunk in deplorable immorality (Isa. ii. 5, etc.; v. 7, etc.; Micah i. 5; ii. 1, etc.). Cf. the phrase used of the Babylonian tower-builders on the monuments: "Babylon corruptly to sin went" ('Records,' etc., vii. 131). Jotham stood alone, or nearly so, in an extremely degenerate age; like Noah in the antediluvian world (Gen. vii. 1), Lot in Sodom (2 Pet. ii. 8), and Daniel in Babylon (Dan. vi. 13); which heightens one's idea of both the nobility of his character and the strength of his piety. It requires a strong man, intellectually and morally, to be singular, and especially to be good, when goodness is unpopular and immorality with irreligion holds the field. "This king was not defective in any virtue, but was religious towards God and righteous towards men" (Josephus).

II. JOTHAM, A SUCCESSFUL KING. 1. *The duration of his success.* Throughout his entire reign of sixteen years. If his father's reign was longer and more brilliant, his was more symmetrical and complete. If he was a more obscure monarch than his father, he was probably as good a man. 2. *The nature of his success.* (1) His buildings were important. (*a*) He restored and beautified the upper gate of the temple (ver. 3), *i.e.* the northern gate, which led into the inner court (Ezek. viii. 3, 5, 14), and was called "upper" probably because it stood upon higher ground than the gates upon the south (Ezek. ix. 2). His reason for such architectural ornamentation most likely was, either that it formed the principal entrance to the temple (Bertheau), or that there the burnt offerings were washed; cf. Ezek. xl. 38 (Bähr). In beginning with the temple, Jotham observed the right order; first the things of God, and then those of man; first religion, and then business; first the claims of Heaven, and then those of earth. (*b*) He added to the city fortifications. "On the wall of Ophel," which ran along the southern slope of the temple hill and joined the temple wall at the south-eastern corner, at the turning of the wall (ch. xxvi. 9), where his father before him had raised erections, "he built much." As Solomon's palace, on the southern slope, was considerably lower than the temple, Jotham may have had a good deal of building. (*c*) "In the mountains of Judah," on the military roads, he erected fortified cities or garrisons; and in the forests or wooded hills, where such "cities" could not be placed, he constructed "castles and towers" (ver. 4). Thus, while like a good man he honoured God, like a prudent sovereign he looked well to the safety of his kingdom. (2) His wars were victorious. "He fought with the Ammonites, and prevailed against them" (ver. 5), compelling them to resume payment of the tribute which Uzziah had imposed upon them (ch. xxvi. 8), but which they had discontinued. If, after two payments, the tribute ("a hundred talents of silver," equal to £50,000, with "ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley") ceased, this was probably due to the incursions of Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel (2 Kings xv. 37) having enabled them to successfully assert their independence. Probably in close connection with this subjection of the Ammonites was his annexation to the kingdom of Judah of the trans-Jordanic tribe of Gad, of whose population he made a registration according to their genealogies, doubtless for the purpose of imposing an assessment (1 Chron. v. 17). (3) His reputation was high. If barely realizing the ideal of uprightness or perfection contained in his name (Jotham, equivalent to "Jehovah is upright," or "perfect)," he yet maintained an untarnished escutcheon. Though a man's funeral cannot always be accepted as an index to his moral excellence (Luke xvi. 22), yet the circumstance that when Jotham died he was interred in the royal mausoleum, "in the city of David," was a proof he had done nothing to forfeit the good opinion of his subjects. Contrast the burials of Joash (ch. xxiv. 25), of Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 23), and of Ahaz (ch. xxvii. 27). 3. *The explanation of his success.* Neither the wealth of his kingdom, which was "full of silver and gold" (Isa. ii. 7), nor the size of his army, "The land [in his day] was also full of horses, neither was there any end of chariots" (Isa. ii. 7), nor the splendour of his merchant navy, which consisted of ships of Tarshish (Isa. ii. 16), accounted for the remarkable prosperity of this sovereign's reign. If, on the one hand, these were rather signs and results of the flourishing condition of the nation; on the other hand, they were ominous of, and contributory to, the nation's decay. Not only did these in no way diminish, but, on the contrary, fostered and increased the worst characteristics of the people—a love of luxury, which evinced itself amongst the women in a passion for finery and dress (Isa. iii. 16—24), amongst the men in licentiousness and oppression, witchcraft and soothsaying (Isa. ii. 6; iii. 9), amongst both in haughtiness and self-conceit (Isa. ii. 17), a thirst for war (Isa. ii. 7), and an infatuation for idolatry (Isa. ii. 8). The real secret of the kingdom's prosperity lay in the piety of its king. Judah was blessed because Jotham "prepared [or, 'ordered'] his ways before the Lord"—a clear case of imputation of merit and of vicarious blessing. Jotham systematically and studiously guided his personal and official actions by a regard to the Divine Law, and Jehovah caused him to become "mighty." "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30). No piety likely to be either deep or permanent that does not spring from well-considered choice and lead to scrupulous obedience. A good man may pray, "Order my steps in thy Word" (Ps. cxix. 133), knowing that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. x. 23), and that a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord (Ps. xxxvii. 23); if a truly good man, he will try to answer his own prayer (Ps. ci. 2), in doing which he has God's encouragement (Ps. l. 23). Rehoboam prepared neither his heart nor his way, and consequently went astray (ch. xii. 14).

LESSONS. 1. The best men are often the least known. 2. A life short in years may be long in influence. 3. The danger of inferring inward stability from outward prosperity.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

This chapter is paralleled by 2 Kings xvi. There is a great deal gained in this case by addition on the two accounts, however. Our chapter contains the wickedness by idolatry of Ahaz, the severe punishment thereof by the King of Syria, the Syrian captivity of Judah, and the release of the latter so unexpectedly (vers. 1—15); other punishments by war of Ahaz, his hardened heart, greater sins, and end (vers. 16—27). The united unsuccessful attacks of Syria and Israel, under Rezin and Pekah respectively, on Jerusalem, and attempt at the siege of Ahaz there; the Syrian recovery of Elath, and expulsion of the Jews thence, and the Assyrian taking of Damascus (2 Kings xvi. 5—9), are, though so full of interest, all omitted from our chapter.

Ver. 1.—**Ahaz.** The signification of this word is "grasping." Isaiah (vii. 1; xxxviii. 8), Hosea, and Micah were contemporaries of Ahaz, whose reign may be set down at B.C. 744—728. His name shows in the Assyrian tablets, *Jahukhazi*, or Jehoahaz.

Ver. 2.—**Molten images**; Hebrew, מַסֵּכוֹת. This was a characteristic sin of Israel, but Judah had not been guilty of making molten images during late reigns.

Ver. 3.—**Burnt incense . . . Hinnom.** The sin of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 7, 8) is reproduced. For the valley of the son of Hinnom, which curved round the south-west and west of Jerusalem (*Ge Ben-Hinnom*), see Conder's 'Handbook,' ch. vii. pp. 330—332. **Burnt his children** (see Lev. xviii. 21); but there cannot be any doubt that Ahaz's practice here stated was an incident of the Moloch-superstition and horrible cruelty (see the parallel in its vers. 3, 4).

Ver. 5.—**The King of Syria.** The name of this king (Rezin) does not appear in this chapter, but it does in the parallel, vers. 5, 6, 9. **They smote him.** A previous unsuccessful attempt of Rezin and Pekah is apparently passed over in our chapter (2 Kings xvi. 5), while the contents of our present verse must be understood to have its place just before the last clause of ver. 5 in the parallel, and to be significantly confirmed by the contents of its following verse. **They smote . . . carried away . . . brought.** These *plurals* strongly *indicate* the dislocation of sentences in compiled matter. They probably came from original sources, where the conjoined names of Rezin and Pekah had been the antecedents (see on this history, Isa. vii., viii., ix.). **Brought them to Damascus.** The mode of the first introduction of the name of Ahaz in connection with Damascus in the parallel (ver. 10) is a suggestive illustration of how these parallel but very various narratives proffer to piece themselves, and in a wonderful manner clear their whole subject of any possible taint of the "cunningly devised fable." A great multitude of Judah's people had been carried captives and "brought to Damascus." When the King of Assyria (parallel, ver. 9) came to the help of Ahaz, he struck a fierce and evidently decisive blow against Damascus and Rezin, and to Damascus, "to meet" Assyria's king, Tiglath-Pileser, the very next verse tells us, Ahaz went—little doubt to pay his bills, over which a decent veil of silence is thrown. **He was also delivered into the hand, etc.** The form of this sentence, with its "also," and with its evidently tacked-on appearance, coupled with the conjunction "for" with which the following verse is dragged in, seems to give great probability to the idea, *first*, that the latter half of ver. 5 and all of ver. 6 find their real place before (say) the word "Damascus;" and *secondly*, that they are strictly and conterminously paralleled by the former part of ver. 5 parallel.

Ver. 6.—(See foregoing note.) **An hundred and twenty thousand.** The number is large, but, the uncertainty of very many of these figures notwithstanding, it is impossible absolutely to pronounce it incredible. **Because they had forsaken.** The now frequent refrain of the writer.

Ver. 7.—**The king's son.** This can scarcely mean the child of Ahaz, considering Ahaz's age; some think a brother of the present king, son of Jotham, may be intended. We have also to fall back upon the use of the phrase, "king's son," for some special official of the king or court (see note on ch. xviii. 25; and its parallel, 1 Kings xxii. 26). **The governor of the house;** Revised Version, *ruler*. We have probably a sufficient clue to this designation in 1 Kings iv. 6; and the designation itself, ch. xviii. 3; 2 Kings xviii. 18; ch. xix. 11. **Next to the king;** Hebrew, מִשְׁנֵה הַמֶּלֶךְ; literally, therefore, *the next of the king*, the general meaning of which expression cannot be doubtful (comp. 1 Chron. xvi. 5; Esth. x. 3; Neh. xi. 9), but the exacter scope and functions of the person under the kings of the divided kingdom thus designated is less certain. It is naturally to be supposed his place may have been king's deputy in councils in his absence, or in and over the city itself, when he was at a distance with an army.

Ver. 8.—**To Samaria.** While the Syrian king carried his captives to Damascus (ver. 5), the Israel king carried his to Samaria. The numbers in this verse, with the added hundred and twenty thousand whom Pekah slew (ver. 6), may be compared with the military strength of the kingdom in Uzziah's time, as given in ch. xxvi. 13.

Ver. 9.—The very interesting contents of this and the following six verses are not found in the parallel. **A prophet of the Lord . . Oded.** We do not know any particulars of this prophet; for his name and its possible identity with the name Iddo, see notes on ch. ix. 29; xv. 1, 8. The growingly frequent references to the interposition of the prophets is much to be noticed, and their dignity, courage, fidelity, are brought into grand relief. They are very typical of the moral presence of which no national history, as centuries solemnly flew on, gives the slightest symptom of a slackening need. The very same may be said alike of the truth and those qualified and commissioned to bear it, of the message and the messenger. **Before the host;** i.e. in very face of the host, somewhat too mildly rendered "to meet" the host, in ch. xv. 2, etc. **In a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.** To the wonderful life of this figure, that must strike every reader, must be added the force that comes of its moral rather than merely material suggestion—a moral suggestion that reminds us of that of the sentence of far greater antiquity, and from the sacred lip of the Inspirer of all prophets, "The voice of thy brother's blood *crieth unto me* from the ground." The rage had *not* been that on which the sun did *not* go down; it had been so fierce that upon it the sun ought never to have been required to look. See for interesting particulars and then more general references, Jer. li. 9; Ezra ix. 6; Ps. xxxviii. 4; Gen. xviii. 21; xxviii. 12; Job xx. 6. The expression of the text, however, "reacheth," or "toucheth," cannot be understood to reproduce as a perfect equivalent the older above-quoted one of "crieth." In other words, the magnitude of the rage is the first thing set forth, and the particular language in which it is set forth well postulates the inference of its abominableness in God's sight.

Ver. 10.—**For bondmen and bondwomen unto you.** The denunciation of Deut. xxviii. 68 may be instructively compared with the emphatic prohibition of Lev. xxv. 46. The moral thread of ordinance that runs everywhere through the divinely established economy of the Old Testament Judaism should be devoutly observed. The verse, in the position of its words, furnishes an example of almost classical pattern: *And now persons who are children of Judah and Jerusalem, ye are resolving within yourselves* (literally, *saying*) *to subdue into bondmen and bondwomen for yourselves.*

Ver. 11.—**The fierce wrath;** i.e. not unannounced, for Oded means to say, "You are doing contrary to the Law and the Prophet Moses," as just quoted.

Ver. 12.—Oded's appeal, and forcible but most temperate and pertinent argument of the previous verses, was addressed to those who led the returning army, flushed with victory and haughty with their captives led in triumph, and, as ver. 15 shows, cruelly, and with every deprivation of clothes and of shoes, etc. It now, however, fortunately meets with most welcome practical support from those (certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim) who had not had a hand in what had been done, and now stood by, in some measure like umpires. They, at any rate, are convinced, partly perhaps in that their blood was not hot with the battles that had been. We do not know particulars of these four worthier men, whose names, with their fathers', are here "expressed" (ver. 15). They were evidently conscious of their past sins, had fear toward God, were not of those who, sinning, hastened to sin yet more; but they wished to flee from the wrath to come, the "fierce wrath," already impending. *Ephraim* (see note on ch. xxv. 7).

Ver. 13.—**Hither.** The returning army was, no doubt, on the outskirts of Samaria.

though the exact site of this interesting scene is not written. **For whereas we have offended against the Lord**; Hebrew, כִּי לְאַשְׁמַת יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ. Translate, *For to the just cause of offence on the part of Jehovah with us, ye propose to add to our sins, and to the offence existing already with us; for great is that offence*, etc. The genius of the word here rendered "offence," seems, from careful comparison of the eighteen times of its occurrence, to point to "guilt," "sin," or "trespass," as the causes awakening offence in any one against those who do them. The repentant temper of these "heads of the children of Ephraim" was admirable, and indicated their distance from many, many others of their people and day, and of Judah, who were either callous or reckless.

Ver. 14.—**Before the princes and all the congregation**; *i.e.* the four and those who were now congregated round them.

Ver. 15.—**The men which were expressed by name**; Revised Version, *which have been expressed by name.* This *is* the probable, yet hardly certain, meaning of the clause. *By name* should be "by names." And the meaning may be that "the men who were *now* specified by names for the work rose up," etc. Under any aspect, it was likely enough these would embrace the four who had already spoken so piously and seasonably (ch. xxxi. 19; 1 Chron. xii. 31; xvi. 41). **The captives**; Hebrew, שִׁבְיָה; literally, *the captivity;* i.e. of course, the body of captives (Deut. xxi. 11; xxxii. 42). **Clothed . . . arrayed.** These two renderings are both the same verb (לָבֵשׁ), and even the same (hiph.) conjugation. The undisguised, apparent repetition in the Hebrew text, veiled and disguised in both the Authorized and Revised Versions, may perhaps be owing to the intentness of the narrative on saying, *first*, that all *who were literally naked* were clothed from their own captive spoil; and then, *secondly*, that *all* whosoever (dusty, dirty, tired, footsore) were clothed, in the sense of being fresh dressed. The eleven particulars of this verse are uncommonly graphic in the Hebrew text brevity of description. The verse may read thus: *And the men appointed by their names rose up, and took the captives by the hand, and all of the naked of them they dressed from the very spoil, and dressed them* (*all*), *and shod them, and fed them, and gave them drink, and anointed them, and carried upon asses all the feeble ones, and brought them to Jericho, city of palms, to the very side of their brethren, and . . . returned to Samaria.* These made their own so far the blessedness of them of Matt. xxv. 34—36. **Jericho**; *i.e.* well within their own land, to a fertile and shaded spot of it, with plenty of water, and whence probably all might most easily wend their ways to their own district and town. *Jericho* lay on the border of Benjamin. See Stanley's most interesting account ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 305).

Ver. 16.—**At that time did King Ahaz . . . kings of Assyria.** The vagueness of this common formula, "at that time," would doubtless not have been apparent in the original sources. In the present instance we may fall back on our vers. 5, 6 to give it distinctness; but see vers. 5, 6, 7 of the parallel, which involve their own formula and the present in some little uncertainty. *The kings of Assyria.* The Septuagint and other versions show the singular number. Our plural may perhaps find an explanation in ch. xxx. 6; xxxii. 4.

Ver. 17.—**The Edomites.** So the work of Amaziah (ch. xxv. 11, 14; 2 Kings xiv. 7) in reducing Edom was again undone (see also 2 Kings xvi. 7, where "Edom" should be read for "Aram").

Ver. 18.—**The Philistines.** These also had been subjugated again and again, and of late by Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 6, 7), work that was now undone. The exultant relief to the Philistines, short-lived though it was, is referred to elsewhere, as in the Book of Isaiah (xiv. 29, 31), the Psalms (lx. 8). **Beth-shemesh.** On the border of Judah (ch. xxv. 23, and our note there; 1 Chron. vi. 44). **Ajalon.** This was also on the border (1 Chron. vi. 54; ch. xi. 10). **Gederoth.** This was in the Shefelah (Josh. xv. 41). **Shocho**; or, *Socho*, one of Rehoboam's cities, near the Philistines, and therefore selected for fortification (ch. xi. 7). **Timnah.** This bordered on Dan (Josh. xv. 10). **Gimzo.** Not elsewhere mentioned, but well known in the modern village *Jimzu*, its site on what would have been the border of Dan. **They dwelt there.** This expression is, of course, designed to indicate that the Philistines obtained successfully some foothold.

Ver. 19.—**Ahaz King of Israel.** So Jehoshaphat was called in ch. xxi. 2 "King of *Israel.*" If these two occasions are not merely cases of the writer's or of a copyist's easily imaginable mistake, they must be regarded as naming the king of the chief divided kingdom by the title of the whole kingdom or people. **He made Judah naked**; Revised Version, *had dealt wantonly in Judah*; or margin, Revised Version, *had cast away restraint* in Judah; Hebrew, הִפְרִיעַ.

Ver. 20.—**Tilgath-Pilneser** (see 1 Chron. v. 6, 26; 2 Kings xv. 29; xvi. 10, our parallel. See our notes in full on 1 Chron. v. 6, 26). Gesenius dates his reign as King of Assyria as B.C. 753—734; others as about B.C. 747—728. **Distressed him, but strengthened him not.** This is in our writer's usual deeper moral and religious vein, and was no doubt most true. For all Ahaz paid and bribed out of the sacrilegiously employed treasure of the temple, out of the depreciating and partial dismantling of "the house of the king," and out of the begged contributions or taxes extortionately wrung "of the princes" (see the succinct account of next verse, and compare the parallel in its vers. 8, 18), he bought a master for himself, servitude, tributariness, and the humiliation of disgrace itself. The temporary relief he obtained (and which the writer of Chronicles in no way means to deny) from one enemy rivetted round his neck the yoke of another and greater. And worse than this, he secured in his own heart the greatest adversary of all—a restless, implacable foe, which ever goaded him on to worse folly and deeper sin.

Ver. 21.—Add to references of last verse ch. xvi. 2; 2 Kings xii. 18; xviii. 15. **But he helped him not.** See the parallel in its ver. 9 (2 Kings xvi.), and note on our foregoing verse.

Ver. 22.—**This is that King Ahaz.** Expunge the words in italic type. Revised Version, *this same King Ahaz.* But the most literal rendering will be the most forcible: *He, the King Ahaz.*

Ver. 23.—**He sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him.** The writer must be understood to speak from the point of view of Ahaz, in putting it, that it was "the gods of Damascus who smote." The formula, all Israel, is a clear instance of how the name "Israel" is used as "Judah." *The gods of Damascus* were, of course, the same with those of Syria, of which Damascus was capital. Their names were Rimmon, Tabrimmon, Hadad, and some others. Perhaps no verse in Chronicles is more typical of the special moral aspects and aims of the writer.

Ver. 24.—This verse (completed, indeed, by the verse following) heightens to its climax the description of the guilt of Ahaz, which grew to madness. Vers. 17, 18 of the parallel enlarge our view of what Ahaz did in the way of destruction, relating his mutilation of the bases and laver and sea, after also the displacement of the brazen altar in favour of that the pattern of which he had sent from Damascus to Urijah the priest, who must have been a consenting party to the iniquity. Our ch. xxx. 14 speaks of the time that came when these wicked steps of king and priest began to be retraced, and, with the previous verses of same chapter, are the sad but interesting reverse of the present passage. The modern Jews commemorate, by the observance of a fast, this mournful crisis of Judah's history.

Ver. 26.—**The book of the kings of Judah and Israel.** Parallel (ver. 19), "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah."

Ver. 27.—**Slept with his fathers . . . buried . . . in the city, . . . Jerusalem . . . not brought into the sepulchres of the kings.** Parallel (ver. 20), "slept with his fathers . . . buried with his fathers in the city of David." See our notes on ch. xxvi. 23 (parallel, 2 Kings xv. 7); xxiv. 25 (parallel, 2 Kings xii. 21); xxi. 20 (parallel, 2 Kings viii. 24).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—27.—"*This King Ahaz:*" *the* "*progress*" *of a king literally devoid of religion.* In such words, the significance of which no one can mistake, is the royal person who is the chief subject of this chapter pointed to (ver. 22). Ahaz is the bad son of a good father. He is a type of those who begin badly, who are untaught by experience, who grow worse by suffering and adversity, and who end by maddening themselves, to their own destruction! The career of his father Jotham is written, apparently, without a fault, and without a reflection to be cast on him; the career of this son is written, apparently, without one redeeming feature to be put to his account. The contents of this chapter look like a series of pictures, marking a royal progress in wrongness, and which, in the issue, led to a very insanity of irreligion! In this progress notice how the king—

I. FORSOOK THE RIGHT MODEL. To be not "like his father David" was at once to want the stamp of a true royalty. To be "like the kings of Israel," the schismatic line, was to be stamped with the stamp of a base and ungenuine royalty. This description (ver. 2) of "the ways" in which Judah's king "walked" was, indeed, on the other hand, a fearful characterization for that same schismatic line of Israel. For Ahaz, however, thus to be, and be described, as at the beginning of his reign, when he was already arrived at the twenty-fifth year of his age, was an evil, anyway, of that *worst* calamity, viz. hope for an altered future almost hopelessly shut out! The augury proved too true. Ahaz counts for nothing Moses, as well as "his father David." He systematically "framed mischief by" his own "law," and the law of heathendom, He flagrantly breaks, and teaches the breaking of, the first two of the ever-venerable ten commandments—that vital Heaven-graven foundation-code of legislation of his kingdom. Sacrilege, idolatry, and each most heathenish practice and rite of un-"natural religion" he honours and follows. He gets as far as it is possible to get from "fearing" and "loving" and "serving" the Lord God of his fathers "with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." For a young man, for *any* man to forsake the right model, the one Example, is to leave himself to pick among many, uncertain in every direction, except in the one certainty of all being wrong! One only safe right rule is ours to follow; "*If the Lord be God*, follow him" (1 Kings xviii. 21). Examples abound, but absolute safety and rightness can be found in one only.

II. NEGLECTED WARNING. The warning which Ahaz neglected, with a long succession, to say nothing of all those who may have gone before, was not merely warning *written*, *preached* loudly and earnestly and *with prophet's voice proclaimed*, but it was that practical warning, the *ultimatum* of all, the warning of *consequences*. Defeat, and the captivity of many of his people at the hand of the King of Syria; defeat, and the captivity of many of his people at the hand of the King of Israel; the slaying of his son, of the governor of his house, and of the man that was "the second to him in the kingdom;"—all these judgments, offering to bring closer and closer home to him and to his conscience the facts of the case, of his own sins, and of the consequences of those sins, he is blind to, or, *not* blind, he nevertheless disregards them to the very point of infatuation. But, again, not only are the practical warnings of "wrath" thus set at nought. Providences of mercy compete with those of "wrath." In one of the most remarkable and pathetic passages of all history, startling us by its lifelike and more than dramatic reality—a very monograph of pathos—seven verses (9—15) here record this providence. They tell us how, by the side of Judah's king, who refuses to give ear, to repent, or to learn, "certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim in Samaria," listen attentively to the remonstrance and teaching of the Prophet Oded, are open to the impression of the justness of what he says, see in a moment the truth of things for themselves, and reason without delay with the people, producing salutary convictions in them; and then, even with the atoning addition of all tenderest ministrations (ver. 15), lead back their captives of Judah to Jericho, to the shade of that "city of palm trees," and to the yet kinder shelter of "their brethren." What a practical message *that* was for a hardened heart like that of Ahaz! What an appeal and suggestion for the better feelings, if any, of Judah's king! But *this* too, *this* species of warning was in vain!

III. IMPROVED ADVERSITY TO THE GREATER INIQUITY, AND TO THE REAPING OF GREATER PUNISHMENT AND DEEPER DEGRADATION FOR HIMSELF AND NATION. The Edomites have successfully "smitten" him; the harrying incursions of the Philistines are ever on him; they take village after village, and also so take them, that they are safe in taking up their abode in them, for "they dwelt there" (ver. 18). Ahaz does not repent, and does not for a moment "seek to the Lord." The strickenness of sin is on him; the *persistence* in evil is his disease; the fatal aggravation of folly and infatuation of obstinacy cloud his brain, eclipse his reason, "make gross" his heart. He seeks to the King of Assyria, and bribes him with the sacred things of the house of the Lord, with the precious things of his own palace, with the robbed things of his princes. And that king takes all, but gives no help—"he helped him not" (ver. 21); mocks his defencelessness; makes sport of his supplications to him! To one deeper depth, in his deafened despair, he descends. Ahaz vows for his own the gods of those who "smote him" (ver. 23). His logic is that the house too of "the gods of the kings of Syria" may possibly prove a house divided against itself! It was a last, cruel, hapless resort! The refuge was the refuge of ruin—"the ruin of him, and of all Israel" (ver. 23). He ends all by entreating for his memory loathing unqualified. He hacks to pieces the collected "vessels of the house of God;" but shuts up (by just so much *too* late) "the doors of the house" itself; rears every wild altar; profanes with "high places every several city of Judah" to burn there the "incense of abomination;" excludes his own bones from the sepulchres of the best of his ancestors; and leaves us one more fearful lesson, that none and nothing make so sure a mock as sin itself makes of the "fool, who makes a mock" at it!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Spiritual rebound.* From Jotham to Ahaz, from the king who "made his ways firm before Jehovah" to the king who "made molten images for Baalim," and "burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen," what a terrible rebound, what a deplorable reaction! We may regard this as—

I. AN EVENT WHICH FREQUENTLY OCCURS. 1. Sometimes to *the nation.* We have a notable instance of this in the reaction from the Puritan strictness of the Commonwealth to the unbounded licence of the Restoration. 2. Sometimes to *the Church.* A sudden passing from the ardour of some fervent enthusiasm to the rigour of utter indifference and inactivity. 3. Sometimes to *the family.* When a godly, devoted, and useful parent is succeeded by a dissolute and mischief-working son (as in the text). 4. Sometimes in *the individual.* A man is led to the appearance (if not the reality) of piety and zeal; he worships regularly in the house of the Lord, and takes a prominent part in the activities of the Church; then with more or less of suddenness he declines; he abandons his religious convictions and his moral principles, and stands before society as a spiritual renegade, living to injure and destroy all he had appeared to love and had busied himself to promote.

II. ITS EXPLANATION. 1. Not in any law of human change. It may be contended that there is in the mind and in the history of man a constant ebb and flow as in the tides of the sea; that when a mental or moral movement has proceeded long and far in one direction, the time has come for a counter-movement in the opposite direction. But there is no reason, in the nature of things, why we should not move steadily on in the direction of wisdom and virtue. Such a tendency as this is not properly *a law;* it is only a generalization from a comparatively small number of particulars. Hence we also say: 2. Not in any inherent human fickleness. Man is more or less fickle; *i.e.* many men are very fickle, and some men are seriously so, and others slightly so. But other men are constant, faithful, loyal to the last. Man, as man, is under no necessity to change his course, to reverse his direction, to pursue what he has shunned, to pull down what he has built up. We find the explanation we seek: 3. Partly in the unwisdom of the good. Possibly Jotham may have been an unwise father in some material respects; he may have so acted, so ruled his royal household, as to present to his son an unattractive aspect of godliness; he may have failed to distinguish between the requirements of manhood and of youth. Certainly, if *he* did not, *very many parents do,* and this their folly is the account of the departure and defection of their sons. It is clear that the unwise austerity of the Puritans had much to do with the excesses of the following generation. Very often, indeed, the intemperate heats of some body of Christian or philanthropic men account, in a large degree, for the repugnance and retrogression of the community. Unwisdom in the good may be as mischievous in its results as the very transgressions of the wicked. 4. Partly in the shallowness of the piety or morality in question. When this is nothing more than mere habit, especially when that habit is of the body rather than of the mind, is fleshly rather than spiritual, it is not to be expected that loyalty will last; it *is* to be expected that the first strong wind of inclination, or of worldly interest, or of social pressure, will carry such a one away and bear him whithersoever it wills. The great lesson for parents, teachers, pastors, reformers, patriots, is this—dig deep if you would have your house stand. If you would not see your sons and daughters, your fellow-members or fellow-citizens swept round with the current, facing the wrong goal, exerting their influence for evil instead of for good, then do not be content with scattering seed anyhow and anywhere. Dig the deep furrow, sow the seed well; plant living convictions in the judgment and in the conscience of men. Get *the whole nature* on the side of truth and righteousness. If the man himself, and not only his external habits, not only his feelings and inclinations—if he himself, through his whole spiritual nature, gives himself to the service of Christ and of man, you need not fear the coming of an adverse tide; you need not fret about the fickleness of our kind; you will witness no painful and pitiable reaction; the path of those you serve will be one of continuous ascent; it will be "the path of the just, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."—C.

Vers. 9—15.—*Divine and human pity.* A very striking and a most unusual incident is here related; it has very few parallels in the page of ancient history. The hand that struck down the enemy very rarely failed to strike him when he was down. Here we have a refreshing picture of human relenting; of men who had just presented the cup of woe putting to the lips of the suffering a cup of mercy. But first we have a picture of—

I. Divine pity in the midst of Divine penalty. It is clear that the people of Judah owed their defeat entirely to the fact that they had grievously sinned against the Lord (see ver. 9). But there was a point beyond which justice did not demand that penalty should go. And at that point Divine pity might appear. There it did appear, and it arrested the hand of the cruel smiter. God sends judgment, but in wrath he "remembers mercy" (Hab. iii. 2). He sends the serious sickness which brings pain and weakness, but at a certain point he sends the remedy and restoration. He brings down upon the guilty the strong indignation of their kind, but he raises up the compassionate and the considerate who visit the prisoner or the lonely with words of friendly sympathy and cheer. He brings the strong but rebellious kingdom to defeat and humiliation, but he causes it to grow up again to competence and power. He bruises, but he does not shatter; he lays low, but he raises up.

II. Official faithfulness. Oded had a difficult and dangerous part to play on this occasion, but he bore himself right nobly (vers. 9—11). He did not flinch from words of energetic condemnation (vers. 9, 10), or from words of unpalatable advice (ver. 11). If God puts us into any responsible position, whether in the family, or in the Church, or in the city, or in the councils of the nation, we are most sacredly bound to play our part courageously. No man is fitted to occupy a post of trust and honour unless he is prepared, at times, to say and do that which is likely to be resented. Though we may not be called upon to face a triumphant army with words of remonstrance and command, as Oded did now, yet we are sure to be under obligation to say that which is unacceptable and to confront the dislike and disapproval of men. If we are not prepared to do that, we had better stand down at once, and take a lower place. Certainly we are not qualified to speak for God.

III. Human influence. We have two instances of human influence being exercised with remarkable success. The outspoken prophet persuades the princes, and they in their turn persuade the soldiers to release the captives and to abandon the spoil which they had taken. This was a truly remarkable success. To induce men who are flushed with victory to forego the advantages they have won with the sword is to accomplish a great feat. It shows what man can do with man; what influence a strong voice can exert upon the human heart. 1. It is always well worth while to interpose between men and the wrong they are meditating; we may save them from great guilt and others from great suffering. 2. We must be in downright earnest, and speak with entire fearlessness and frankness, as both prophet and princes did now, or we shall not succeed. We must speak as those who are perfectly convinced, as those who know what is right, and have no hesitation at all as to the course which should be taken.

IV. Human pity. Instead of slaughtering their prisoners, which in that age might have been done without pity or remorse, we have these soldiers of Israel showing all possible kindness to them (ver. 15). It is a common thing now for men to show a magnanimous kindness to their fallen enemy even on the battle-field. But the teaching of the Lord of love has done its work to some considerable extent, and has mercifully modified the cruelties of war. The scene of the text was something of an anticipation of the injunction, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." It is for us to illustrate the spirit then shown, on every opportunity. We should spare those who are in our power; it may be in the domain of business; it may be in the social circle; it may be round the domestic table; it may be in something so simple as a debate, so common as an ordinary argument. But wherever or whatever it be, to spare our opponent when he is down, to save him from the miseries of defeat, to put him in the way of return to self-respect and honour, to "take back our captives to Jericho," is to do no *more* than these Israelites did on this particular occasion; it is to do no *less* than our Master requires of us at all times and under every circumstance (Matt. v. 43—48).—C.

Vers. 17—19.—*Blow upon blow.* Ahaz was a very great transgressor, and he was (as we might expect he would be) a very great sufferer. He received blow upon blow from the righteous hand of that holy Ruler who by present and temporal visitations was educating his people in the ways of heavenly wisdom. First Rezin King of Syria defeated him, and carried away many captives to Damascus (ver. 5). Then Pekah King of Israel slew his army with a great and pitiless slaughter (ver. 6). Then the Edomites smote Judah, and went away with the usual spoil (ver. 17). Then the Philistines "invaded the cities of the low country," and took several important places (ver. 18). Thus "the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz." One blow fell after another, until the land was thoroughly smitten and stripped, left "naked to its enemies" (ver. 19). We are reminded by these successive inflictions of—

I. THE ACCUMULATING PENALTY WHICH SIN ALWAYS PAYS. 1. This often comes in the form of *obvious and apparent losses.* The trangressor who "fears not God, neither regards man," finds himself subjected to a series of adversities, which he regards as misfortunes, but which we recognize as penalties. He loses the confidence and esteem of his worthier neighbours; then he loses custom, trade, support, and then and thus he loses money; then he loses his substance by extravagance and, it may be, by one or more expensive vices—and vice is a *very* expensive thing; then he loses health and spirit and hope; then he loses the regard of his neighbours generally. So, step by step, he goes down, until "the Lord brings Judah low," until he has "made the land naked." 2. Or penalty may come in the way of *inward and spiritual deterioration.* We cannot pretend to say in what order this proceeds; it varies with individual souls; but blow upon blow descends; bruise upon bruise is suffered by the soul; one defence after another is taken away from the citadel until the land is "naked." It may be that the fine sense of truthfulness goes first; then, perhaps, the spirit of reverence; then the loss of thorough rectitude; then the loss of purity; then may come an indifference to the judgment of the good and wise; then the decay of self-respect;—and what then is left? Let the man who, like Ahaz, hardens himself against God understand this, that as he goes on his guilty way, *even if outward prosperity remains to him,* there is descending upon his spiritual nature, upon *himself* if not upon his circumstances, blow upon blow of righteous penalty—blows which are bruising and slaying him, beneath which he is surely perishing.

II. THE MULTIPLIED SORROWS WHICH RIGHTEOUSNESS SOMETIMES ENDURES. "Many are the afflictions (even) of the righteous" (Ps. xxxiv. 19). To the patient Job, to the faithful Jeremiah, to the devoted Paul, they come in large number and in great strength. Even to the purest and loveliest of the sons and daughters of God there sometimes falls a sad succession of trials; it may be in the heart and on the lips of the most worthy to say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Blow upon blow descends upon *their* head. What does it mean? It simply means that the branch which is bearing fruit the Lord of the vineyard is pruning, "that it may bring forth more fruit;" it means that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," in order that he may make them to be "partakers of his holiness;" it means that the Divine Master is refining and cultivating his servant, to prepare him for a far broader and nobler sphere and for higher and heavenlier work hereafter; it means that affliction is working out an "exceeding weight of glory."—C.

Vers. 21—27.—*Sin in its issues.* To what will sin lead us? What, when it nears its end and when it is finished, will it bring forth? We have the answer in this portion of Ahaz's life.

I. INFATUATION. He robbed the palace and even plundered the temple in order to bribe the King of Assyria to help him, instead of going to the house of the Lord as a servant and suppliant of Jehovah, to seek and find his help. That is to say, he committed robbery and sacrilege in order to secure the succour of a man who afterwards deceived and defrauded him (ver. 21), when, by simple piety and integrity, he might have secured the aid of Omnipotence, the help of One that never fails his people. His course was one of utter infatuation. He neglected the one way that was quite open to him, and that would certainly have succeeded; he adopted a measure that was full of iniquity, and that was likely to end, as it did, in failure. He put the finishing stroke to his fatuity when he worshipped "the gods which smote him" (ver. 23).

Sin does lead down to infatuation. It leads men to seek their joy and their heritage in the poorest and most unsatisfying springs, to pursue wisdom and wealth in directions where emptiness and poverty are alone to be obtained; it leads men to neglect the Fountain of living waters, the Source of all truth and wisdom, of all excellency and joy. It strews the path of the guilty with melancholy failures.

II. DEFIANCE. Ahaz could hardly go further in defying the Lord God of his fathers, the Divine One whom he was taught and trained to worship, than he did by his conduct as here described (vers. 24, 25). It was an act of unholy hardihood, of almost desperate defiance, that could only be the outcome of a guilty obduracy of spirit. He must have resented the action of Jehovah and determined to go all possible lengths in defying his authority. Well might the spirit of Isaiah be aroused as he witnessed this profanation, this open and daring rebellion against the living God. When men have long given way to their folly and to their sinful inclinations they do sometimes go to this awful length. They defy the God that made them, in whose power they stand. They may deny his existence; they may mock at his judgments, and at his final condemnation of their course; they may speak arrogantly and impiously of his power and of his rule: "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" (Ps. lxxiii. 11).

III. DEATH. Ahaz went down to an early and a dishonoured death (ver. 27). We do not wonder that he died before he reached the age of forty. The disasters he brought upon his country, and the mental strain which he must have undergone to proceed to such lengths of impiety, are enough to account for a premature decline and death. And all the better instincts of that instructed people led them to refuse the funereal honour they usually paid to their kings. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The issue of all sin is death—physical, spiritual, eternal. This is its wages. Let those who are moving down its sad decline take note of the end to which they move. But let us realize that to all who will turn from its enticements and break from its evil power, to all who will accept the supreme gift of God in Jesus Christ, "eternal life" is open (Rom. vi. 23).—C.

Vers. 1—27.—"*This is that King Ahaz.*" I. A DEGENERATE SON. Ahaz, "Grasper" or "Possessor." In the Tiglath-Pileser inscriptions, which probably confounded him with the son of Jehoram (ch. xxi. 17), he is called Jehoahaz, "Whom Jehovah grasps," though the Scripture writers may have dropped the prefix "Jeho-" on account of his wickedness (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 264). 1. *He possessed his father's nature.* Of necessity, as his father's son (Gen. v. 3). Yet he improved not upon that nature, but rather deteriorated and corrupted it. Heredity in him took a downward direction. Some knowledge of who his mother was might shed important light upon the question of how he came by his peculiarities of character and disposition. 2. *He enjoyed his father's example.* Jotham "prepared his ways before the Lord his God" (ch. xxvii. 6), yet his pious conduct seemingly exerted no beneficial influence upon his son. Ahaz followed not his father's footsteps, but carved out a path of his own. Example, especially when good, may be potent, but is not omnipotent. 3. *He obtained his father's throne.* Yet he rather tarnished it than added to its lustre. New dignities do not give new hearts or new powers. At the age of twenty—five years younger than his father (ch. xxvii. 1), and only four years older than his grandfather (ch. xxvi. 1)—he assumed the crown of Judah. If the reading "twenty-five" years (Vatican text of the LXX., Arabic, Syriac) be preferred (Ewald, Thenius, Bertheau, Keil, Bähr), on the ground that otherwise he must have married in his tenth or eleventh year, in order, after sixteen years, to be succeeded by a son as old as Hezekiah, who was twenty-five on ascending the throne (ch. xxix. 1), he was still but a youth when crowned, which may suggest that early promotion is not the same thing as early conversion. 4. *He lacked*, i.e. *did not possess, his father's goodness.* Grace runs not in the blood (John i. 13), though corruption does (Job xiv. 4; Ps. li. 5). A man may communicate to his son wealth, learning, fame, power; he cannot, certainly, impart either grace or goodness. 5. *He attained not to his father's grave.* When he died his people buried him in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchres of the kings of Israel. He who in his lifetime had been no true Israelite, though he wore a crown, must not in his death be laid among the sovereigns who were Israelites indeed. Death, which destroys all time's distinctions between man and man (Josh. xxiii. 14; Job iii. 19; Eccles. viii. 8), nevertheless effectually distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked (Prov. xiv. 32; Luke xvi. 22; Rev. xiv. 13).

II. AN APOSTATE KING. Immediately he reached the crown, Ahaz discovered what manner of spirit he was of. With a perfect passion for idolatry—"a mania for foreign religious practices" (Stanley)—he soon outstripped his people, if not the heathen themselves, in his misdevotion, becoming their Coryphæus in superstitious rites, showing himself to be the idolater *par excellence* in Judah, and by his regal example leading his subjects down into unknown depths of infamy (ver. 19). 1. *He renounced the true religion of Jehovah.* Not merely as it had been practised by David (ver. 1), Asa (ch. xv. 17), and Jehoshaphat (ch. xvii. 3), but as it had been observed by his immediate predecessors, Jotham, Uzziah, and Amaziah. If not discontinued at once as to outward form, it was kept up for a season merely as a form; it was from the first abandoned in heart. He began his reign by practising the arts of a hypocrite. 2. *He adopted the false worship of Baal*, which had long held sway in the northern kingdom (ver. 2). Whether he introduced the calf-worship of Jeroboam (Keil), or restricted himself to the manufacture of images of Baal (Bähr), in either case he followed in the way of the Israelitish kings (1 Kings xii. 28; xvi. 32; 2 Kings iii. 2). "It is hard not to be infected by a contagious neighbourhood: whoever read that the kingdom of Israel was seasoned with the vicinity of the true religion of Judah?" (Bishop Hall). 3. *He utilized all the idol-sanctuaries already existing in the land.* "He sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (ver. 4). In so doing he copied bad masters, reproducing the state of matters which had existed in Judah under Rehoboam (1 Kings xiv. 23), and at the moment flourished in Samaria under Hoshea (2 Kings xvii. 10)—a state of matters which from the first had prevailed among the heathen inhabitants of the land (Deut. xii. 2), but which they had been commanded ruthlessly to destroy. On the nature of this worship consult the Exposition. 4. *He introduced the worship of Moloch*, "the savage god of the Ammonites" (Stanley), as Solomon had done before him (1 Kings xi. 7), in open defiance of Divine Law (Lev. xviii. 21; Deut. xviii. 10), setting up an image of that idol—a human figure with a bull's head and outstretched arms—in the valley of Hinnom, a "narrow waterless ravine bounding the site of Jerusalem, and commencing on the west as a shallow dell" (Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 330), and even sacrificing to it one (2 Kings xvi. 3) or more (ch. xxviii. 3) of his own sons, as Manasseh afterwards did (ch. xxxiii. 6). "The image of metal was made hot by a fire kindled within it, and the children, laid in its arms, rolled from thence into the fiery lap below. Voluntary offering on the part of the parents was essential to the success of the sacrifice. Even the firstborn, nay, the only child of the family, was given up. The parents stopped the cries of their children by fondling and kissing them, for the victim ought not to weep, and the sound of complaint was drowned in the din of flutes and kettledrums" (Dr. Dollinger, 'Heidenthum und Judenthum,' quoted by Rawlinson, 'Story of Phœnicia,' pp. 112—114). That the children were not merely passed through the fire as an act of purgation, but actually burned, seems indisputable; it is not certain that the children were thrown alive into the idol's glowing arms, the opinion that they were first slain (Keil, Bähr, Schürer) appearing to be warranted by certain passages in Scripture (Ezek. xvi. 20, 21; xxiii. 39; Isa. lvii. 5; Jer. vii. 31; xix. 5; cf. 2 Kings iii. 27). 5. *He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus.* (1) He did this when the Syrians were inflicting on him military reverses, *i.e.* in the time of his distress (Keil), not after it (Bertheau). Strange that just then, when men most need the help of God, in the hour of affliction and season of calamity, they usually manifest a tendency to run from him, looking for assistance from every quarter but the right one (Jer. iii. 23)—exemplified in Ahaziah (2 Kings i. 2, 3). (2) The reason of his doing this was that he imagined his ill success upon the field of battle had been due, not at all to the hand of God who thereby punished his wickedness, but to the assistance derived by the Syrians from their divinities (ver. 23), and conceived that, by paying them respect in sacrificing to them, he would win their favour to himself instead of them (ch. xxv. 14). Wicked men seldom ascribe their misfortunes or adversities to the right cause, their own ill deserts and God's hand in punishing the same, but mostly attribute them to the "scientific idols," called "chance," "circumstances," "ill luck," etc., which deities they hope to propitiate in a manner hardly less foolish than that of Ahaz, by sacrificing at their unhallowed shrines. (3) The specific mode in which he served the Syrian gods is not stated, as the divinities themselves are not named, and indeed in Scripture never are (Judg. x. 6). The incident of the altar seen by Ahaz at Damascus, and reproduced in Jerusalem (2 Kings xvi. 10—16), is not referred to by the Chronicler. The altar incident occurred when Ahaz was attending Tiglath-Pileser's durbar at Damascus; "the sacrifices" were performed while Ahaz was fighting with the Syrians. (4) The result of his appeal to the gods of Syria was ruin to himself and to all Israel. So all that forsake God shall be ashamed (Jer. xvii. 13), while "their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after other gods" (Ps. xvi. 4), and "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies" (Jonah ii. 8); for "idolaters shall have their part in the lake," etc. (Rev. xxi. 8). 6. *He shut up the doors of the house of the Lord.* (Ver. 24.) It was high time. The man who could displace the brazen altar made by Solomon after patterns furnished by Jehovah (Exod. xxv. 40; xxvi. 30; xxvii. 1; 1 Chron. xxviii. 19), to make room for a new shrine, no matter of what costly material, copied from a heathen temple at Damascus, and fashioned by a servile priest in Jerusalem; the monster who could erect an image of Moloch in his capital and sacrifice to it his own child; the devotee who was so mad upon foreign gods, that the very sight of a heathen temple, altar, or idol caused him to fall a-worshipping;—had obviously no excuse for longer affecting to be a worshipper of Jehovah. Accordingly, he smashed up the vessels and closed the doors of the temple. There should be no more worshipping of Jehovah, if he could help it. It was horrible sacrilege, but it was at least honest. 7. *He did his utmost to provoke Jehovah to anger.* Building altars in every corner of Jerusalem, till, like Athens in the days of Paul, it was wholly given to idolatry, literally stuffed full of idols (Acts xvii. 16), and erecting besides in every city of Judah high places to burn incense unto other gods (vers. 24, 25); he did his best to pour contempt upon the God of his fathers; in his outrageous, fanatical, and senseless idolatry eclipsing all his predecessors, leaving behind him in the race to perdition experts in heathen worship like Rehoboam and Jehoram in Judah, like Jeroboam and Ahab in Israel. It was no wonder that Jehovah at length bestirred himself to take vengeance on this *nonpareil* idolater.

III. AN UNSUCCESSFUL WARRIOR. For the wickedness of himself and people, he and they were "brought low," diminished in numbers, weakened in power, humbled in spirit, by Jehovah, who raised up against them three foreign foes. 1. *The Syrians and Israelites.* (Vers. 5—7.) (1) The leaders of the allied forces were—of the Syrians, Rezin, or Rezon—in the inscriptions, *Razinu,* King of Syria, whose capital was Damascus; of the Israelites, Pekah, the son of Remaliah—in the inscriptions, *Pakaha,* a usurper; whose metropolis was Samaria ('Records,' etc., v. 48—52). (2) The time selected for their assault upon Judah was the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, although for some years previous to Jotham's death similar attacks had not been wanting (2 Kings xv. 37). (3) The object contemplated by the expedition was to overturn the Davidic dynasty, and place upon the throne of Judah "a vassal king, whose father's name, Tabeel, shows that he must have been a Syrian" (Sayce); the Hauran inscriptions exhibiting several names, like Tab'el, compounded with *el,* and the Syrian *Tab'rimmon* forming an exact parallel (Delitzsch, on Isa. vii. 6). It is supposed that a party in Jerusalem favoured the contemplated revolution (Isa. viii. 6). (4) The plan of campaign appears to have been that Rezin should invade Judah from the south, capturing Eloth on the Red Sea, which Uzziah had restored to Judah (ch. xxvi. 2), that Pekah should send a force directly from the north across the borders of the southern kingdom, and that both armies should meet in front of Jerusalem, to reduce it, if possible, by a siege. (5) The result of the invasion, so far as Ahaz and his people were concerned, was disastrous in the extreme. The capital, as Isaiah had predicted, was not taken. It may be questioned if the programme was carried out to the extent of besieging the city. There is ground for thinking this was prevented by the appearance upon the scene of Tiglath-Pileser II. of Assyria (ver. 16; 2 Kings xvi. 7). But (*a*) Rezin of Damascus, besides recovering Eloth (2 Kings xvi. 6), defeated Ahaz in a pitched battle, and carried away a multitude of his subjects captive to Damascus. (*b*) Pekah also routed him with great slaughter in one day's fight, slaying a hundred and twenty thousand of his veteran troops. In particular, Zichri, an Ephraimite hero, struck down three warriors closely related to Ahaz—Maaseiah the king's son, *i.e.* cousin or uncle, as in ch. xviii. 25 and xxii. 11, since Ahaz could hardly at the commencement of his reign have had a son capable of bearing arms; Azrikam, the ruler of the house, not of the temple (ch. xxxi. 13; 1 Chron. ix. 11), but of the palace, hence a high official in the royal household; and Elkanah, that was next or second to the king, *i.e.* his prime minister. In addition, two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters, with much spoil, were carried captive to Samaria. The great number of the slain and of the captives may be accounted for by remembering that it was practically a war for the existence of the southern kingdom, which would require Ahaz to call out all his able-bodied population; that the Israelites were accustomed to act with great cruelty in war (2 Kings xv. 16), and probably did so on this occasion (ver. 9); and that Jehovah had delivered Ahaz and his people into the hands of their enemies on account of their apostasy, as by the lips of Moses (Lev. xxvi. 17, 37) he had threatened he would in such cases do. 2. *The Edomites.* These, whom Uzziah had reduced to subjection (ch. xxvi. 2), were probably emboldened by Rezin's successful attack upon Eloth (2 Kings xvi. 6) to throw off the yoke of Judah, and even attempt reprisals in the shape of an invasion of Judæan territory. This they executed with such military skill, that they carried off, as the Syrians and Israelites had done, a number of prisoners. 3. *The Philistines.* During the previous reign these also had been conquered, and their country occupied by garrisons of Judæan soldiers (ch. xxvi. 6); but, embracing the opportunity afforded by the simultaneous attacks directed upon their ancient enemy and present suzerain, they asserted their independence, made an irruption into the low land and south country of Judah, captured and occupied a number of cities, with their dependent villages: Beth-shemesh (see on ch. xxv. 21); Ajalon, the modern *Jâlo* (ch. xi. 10); Gederoth, in the hill country of Judah (Josh. xv. 36); "the Gedor of the 'Onomasticon,' ten miles from Eleutheropolis, on the road to Diospolis, now the ruin *Jedireh*" (Conder, 'Handbook,' p. 411); Shocho (ch. xi. 7), the *Shuweike* of to-day; Timnah, the present *Tibneh*, on the frontier of Judah three quarters of an hour from Ain-shems; Gimzo, now *Jimsu*, a large village between Lydda and Jerusalem.

LESSONS. 1. The degeneracy of human nature—a good Jotham begets a wicked Ahaz. 2. The madness of idolatry, exemplified in the career of Ahaz. 3. The certainty of retribution, illustrated by the "bringing low" of Judah.—W.

Vers. 8—15.—*The sending back of the captives—an incident of the Israelitish war.* I. THE WARRIORS OF ISRAEL AND THE CAPTIVES OF JUDAH. (Ver. 8.) 1. *The number of the captives.* Two hundred thousand persons. (1) This, following upon a slaughter of one hundred and twenty thousand soldiers, showed the crushing nature of the blow which had fallen upon Judah. (2) It exemplified the horrors of war, especially amongst ancient peoples, with whom the deportation of vast hordes of a country's population was a familiar phenomenon. Cf. among the Jews the twenty thousand footmen taken by David from Hadadezer of Zobah (2 Sam. viii. 4; 1 Chron. xviii. 4), and the ten thousand Edomites captured by Amaziah (ch. xxv. 12); amongst the Assyrians the carrying away of the inhabitants of Samaria to Assyria by Tiglath-Pileser II. (2 Kings xv. 29; cf. 'Records,' etc., v. 52)—"the population, the goods of its people (and the furniture) to the land of Assyria I sent," and the removal by Sargon II. of 27,280 of the leading inhabitants of Samaria to Gozan and Media ('Records,' etc., vii. 28); and amongst the Egyptians the number of foreign peoples transported to the Nile valley as the result of successful campaigns, a number so great as with their descendants to compose in the time of Rameses Sesostris "a third, and probably still more, of all the families of Egypt" (Brugsch, 'Egypt under the Pharaohs,' ii. 104). (3) It illustrated the ease with which, when God willed it, a nation could be "minished and brought low" (Job xii. 23; Ps. cvii. 39). (4) It attested the certainty and severity of God's judgments on account of sin, whether upon nations or individuals (Lev. xxvi. 17; Deut. xxxii. 30; ch. xv. 6). 2. *The persons of the captives.* (1) The brethren of the Israelites, *i.e.* their kinsmen; hence the wickedness of their conduct in enslaving not merely human beings, which was bad, but their own flesh and blood, which was worse, yea, was unnatural; and (2) of these, not the men who had fought against them, which might have been in some sort excusable, but, which was wholly indefensible, the women, with their sons and daughters, who were all alike innocent of offence in either causing or sustaining the war, and therefore should have been exempted from experiencing its miseries. 3. *The destination of the captives.* Samaria, in the Assyrian monuments *Sa-mir-i-na* (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 191), the capital of the northern kingdom, built by Omri (1 Kings xvi. 24).

II. The warriors of Israel and the prophet of Jehovah. (Vers. 9—11.) 1. *The prophet's name.* Oded, "Setting up." The name of the father of Azariah who went out to meet Asa (ch. xv. 2). 2. *The prophet's designation.* A prophet of Jehovah, not of the false Jehovah worshipped in Samaria under the image of a calf (Hos. viii. 5, 6), but of the true Jehovah, which shows that, apostate as the northern kingdom had become, it was not entirely destitute of true religion—even there Jehovah having at least prophets who witnessed for him, like Hosea (i. 1) and Oded, if not also adherents who worshipped him. 3. *The prophet's courage.* He went out to meet the hosts of Israel as they returned from their successful campaign, and warned them of the wickedness of which they had been guilty; as Jehu, the son of Hanani, had met Jehoshaphat returning from Ramoth-Gilead (ch. xix. 2), and a prophet of Jehovah had confronted Amaziah coming from the slaughter of the Edomites (ch. xxv. 15). 4. *The prophet's address.* (1) A reminder that the victory they had obtained had been due not so much (if at all) to their superior military skill or bravery, as to the fact that Jehovah had been angry with Judah, and had delivered her armies into their hands (ver. 9; cf. Neh. ix. 27). (2) A rebuke for the want of pity they had shown towards their brethren upon whom the anger of God had fallen—a circumstance which should have moved their hearts to clemency (Job xix. 21), but which had rather lent intensity to their rage. (3) An accusation that they purposed to make bondmen and bondwomen of the sons and daughters of Judah and Jerusalem—which, besides being an act of cruelty, was likewise an act of folly, since it could not be supposed Jehovah's favour was finally withdrawn from Judah; and an act of presumption, inasmuch as they themselves had not been blameless in the matter of apostatizing from Jehovah, and, if the truth were told, were as much deserving to be punished as their southern brethren and sisters. (4) An appeal to their conscience to say whether what he now affirmed was not correct: "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" Their idolatry was as great as that of Judah had been. Their pitiless butchery of their brethren was crying up against them to heaven. Their bringing away of these innocent women and children was an iniquity which filled up the measure of their guilt (ver. 10). (5) An exhortation to desist from their criminal intention to enslave their brethren, and to send back the captives they had brought, with all convenient speed and with due expressions of regret (ver. 11). (6) An argument to quicken their movements in the path of duty; if they did not, the fierce wrath of Jehovah, which was already on them, would engulf them. The speech, which was a model in respect of compact brevity, lofty eloquence, clear statement, pathetic appeal, resistless logic, and which must have been delivered with combined boldness and persuasiveness, made a deep impression.

III. The warriors of Israel and the princes of Ephraim. (Vers. 12—14.) 1. *The names of the princes.* Azariah (ch. xv. 2; xxii. 6), the son of Johanan, "Jehovah is gracious;" Berechiah, "Whom Jehovah hath blessed" (1 Chron. vi. 39), son of Meshillemoth, "Retribution;" Jehizkiah, the same as Hezekiah, "The might of Jehovah," son of Shallum, "Retribution" (2 Kings xv. 10); and Amasa, "Burden," the name of one of Absalom's captains (2 Sam. xvii. 25), the son of Hadlai, "Rest." These princes were obviously at the head of the Israelitish congregation (ver. 14). 2. *The action of the princes.* They joined the Prophet Oded in resisting the introduction by the soldiers of the captives into the city. That people is fortunate whose leaders are courageous to oppose them in evil-doing, and to point out to them the path of duty. 3. *The speech of the princes.* (1) A refusal to admit the captives into the city (ver. 13); (2) a confession that already they, as a people, had transgressed against Jehovah, and incurred his wrath; and (3) an intimation that the course the soldiers were pursuing was such as would increase their sin and trespass, and expose them to a heavier charge of guilt. 4. *The success of the princes.* "The armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation" (ver. 14). Happy is that community in which the wise and good counsels of its leaders prevail.

IV. The princes of Israel and the captives of Judah. (Ver. 15.) 1. *The* *kindness of the princes.* The above-named (ver. 12), with other famous and distinguished leaders, to whom a similar designation was customarily applied (1 Chron. xii. 31; xvi. 41; ch. xxxi. 19), rose up from their seats of honour in the midst of the assembly, stood forth as the representatives of the people and received at the hands of the soldiers the crowd of captives; out of the spoil, which, as usual, consisted in garments, flocks, and herds, with other articles of value (ch. xv. 14, 15; xx. 25), clothed and shod all amongst them who were naked, giving them to eat and drink (2 Kings vi. 22, 23); anointed with oil such of them as had wounds (Luke x. 34); set the feeble upon asses, of which animals there was a plentiful supply (1 Chron. xxvii. 30; Ezra ii. 67)—a lively picture of the pity and compassion which should ever be shown towards the unfortunate, suffering, and miserable, especially by the people of God (Isa. lviii. 6, 7; Job xxx. 25; Luke x. 37; xiv. 12; 1 Tim. v. 10; 1 John iii. 17). 2. *The return of the captives.* Thus generously treated by the princes, they were sent back, those able to travel by themselves, those requiring to ride accompanied by conductors, who journeyed with them as far as Jericho, the city of palm trees (Judg. iii. 13), distant from Jerusalem about five and a half hours' walk, situated in the tribe of Benjamin, and belonging to the kingdom of Judah. Arrived thither, they were handed over to their brethren, after which their conductors returned to Samaria.

LESSONS. 1. The sin of slavery. 2. The function of prophecy. 3. The beauty of charity.—W.

Vers. 16, 20, 21.—*An unfortunate embassy.* I. THE PERSON APPROACHED. Tiglath-Pilneser (ver. 20), Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xvi. 7); in Assyrian, *Tukul-u-*(Tukeal)-*habal-i-sar-ra*, meaning "He who puts his trust in Adar," or, "Adar is my confidence;" in the LXX. Θαλγαθ-φελασσάρ; the same person as Pul King of Assyria (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' pp. 223—240), to whom Menahem of Israel gave a thousand talents of silver as a bribe for aid to keep the throne he had usurped (2 Kings xv. 17). Originally a gardener (according to Greek tradition), Pul rose to eminence as a soldier, and eventually seized the crown of Assyria in B.C. 745, as Tiglath-Pileser II.

II. THE INVITATION GIVEN. To assist Ahaz against Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel. Already the power of Tiglath-Pileser II. had been felt in numerous expeditions towards the West. Syria, Palestine, and Phœnicia had each resounded at the tread of his conquering legions. In particular, Rezin ('Records,' etc., v. 48), and Menahem, one of Pekah's predecessors on the throne of Israel, had acknowledged his supremacy by paying him tribute (2 Kings xv. 29; 'Records,' etc., v. 48). Accordingly, Ahaz had no doubt that the mighty Assyrian could by a word call off the two royal bandits that, like terriers, had sprung at his throat. Despatching ambassadors to Tiglath-Pileser, he requested aid against his foes from the north and east. To render his application successful, he sent with his plenipotentiaries a heavy largess, in the shape of presents of gold and silver taken from the temple, the palace, and the princes' mansions (2 Kings xvi. 7, 8). An inscription, composed in the last or year before last year of Tiglath-Pileser's reign, speaks of the Assyrian monarch as having received tribute from Mitinti of Askalon, Joachas of Juda, and Kosmalak of Edom (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 263). Though this tribute was probably that which Ahaz paid on visiting Tiglath-Pileser at Damascus (2 Kings xvi. 10), it will serve to illustrate and confirm the fact here mentioned, that Ahaz sent a present with his plenipotentiaries when they went to solicit Tiglath-Pileser's assistance.

III. THE ANSWER RETURNED. Tiglath-Pileser came unto him. 1. *He marched against Rezin.* (2 Kings xvi. 9.) The King of Syria was defeated in a pitched battle, and retreated to his capital. "He, to save his life, fled away alone and like a deer, and into the great gate of his city he entered. His generals alive in hand I captured, and on crosses I raised them. His country I subdued" (Inscription of Tiglath-Pileser, No. 10). "Damascus was closely invested; the trees in its neighbourhood were cut down; the districts dependent on it were ravaged, and forces were despatched to punish the Israelites, Ammonites, Moabites, and Philistines, who had been the allies of Reson. . . . At last, in B.C. 732, after a siege of two years, Damascus was forced by famine to surrender. Reson was slain, Damascus given over to plunder and ruin, and its inhabitants transported to Kir" (Sayce, 'Assyria, its Princes,' etc., pp. 36, 37; cf. Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 282; Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' pp. 258, 259). 2. *He* *turned upon Israel.* (2 Kings xv. 29.) As above stated, this occurred while the siege of Damascus was being pressed forward. The towns of Ijon, Abel-beth-maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, with the districts of Gilead, Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, were captured, and their populations carried away to Syria, while Pekah, their sovereign, perished at the hands of a conspirator, Hoshea, who forthwith seized upon the throne. These details likewise receive confirmation from the monuments. Fragment No. 2 of Tiglath-Pileser's inscription, narrating his war in Palestine, mentions "the city Gaal . . . [probably Gilead] and Abil [Abel-beth-maachah] . . . with the land of Hamri throughout its whole extent as having been joined to the borders of Assyria; the entire population of the district as having been sent to Assyria, and their king, Pakaha, as having been slain" (Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' pp. 284, 285; 'Records,' etc., v. 51, 52; Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' pp. 255, 256). **3.** *He subjected Judah.* This the obvious meaning of the Chronicler's statement, that Tiglath-Pileser "distressed Ahaz, but strengthened him not." Instead of helping him to become an independent sovereign, Tiglath-Pileser made him a tributary to the Assyrian crown; and exactly in harmony with this, Joachaz of Juda appears, along with Mitinti of Askalon, Kosmalak of Edom, and Hanno of Gaza, among the tributary princes who, in the seventeenth or eighteenth year of his reign, did homage to the great king (see above).—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The important reign of Hezekiah extends over this and the following three chapters, counting in all ninety-seven verses. The parallel, for the contents of the first three of these chapters, with their sixty-four verses, is limited to the small number of *six* verses (2 Kings xviii. 1—6), which in its turn is very much fuller (2 Kings xviii. 7—xx.) in the subject of our ch. xxxii. The reason of this so various disposition of matter is by no means wrapt in mystery, our writer's main object being clearly best subserved in exhibiting the moral and religious aspects of the inner history of Judah, as distinguished from its foreign politics—so, for brevity's sake, to denominate them. The chapter contains Hezekiah's pious inauguration of reign and appeal to priests and Levites (vers. 1—11); the cleansing (vers. 12—19), reconsecration (vers. 20—30), and thank offerings (vers. 31—37) of the temple.

Ver. 1.—Hezekiah. The *Ezekias* (as by margin) of Matt. i. 9. **Five and twenty years old.** We have been told (ch. xxviii. 1) that Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years. So that, if *these* numbers be correct, and the numbers of our verse correct, Hezekiah must have been born when his father was only *eleven* years old. Of which all that can be said is, with Keil, that such a thing was not impossible and not unknown. It is far more probable, however, that one of the determining figures is wrong, but we have nothing to guide us to say *which*. **Abijah.** The parallel spells this name "Abi," omitting the final *he*, and dagesh in *yod*. **Zechariah.** This may, perhaps, have been the Zechariah whose name accompanies the mention of the name of "Uriah the priest" in Isa. viii. 2, where we may be surprised to find Uriah called a "faithful witness," when we remember his associations with Ahaz, as told in our foregoing chapter. Some refer our Zechariah, however, to him of ch. xxvi. 5.

Ver. 3.—In the first month; *i.e.* Nisan, the first month of the calendar year (see vers. 2, 13, 15 of next chapter), not simply the first month of the new king's reign. **And repaired them.** This repairing of Hezekiah was, unhappily, subsequently undone of his own hands (2 Kings xviii. 14—16).

Ver. 4.—The east street; Hebrew, לִרְחוֹב הַמִּזְרָח. This word, rendered here "street," occurs forty-two times, and is always rendered by the same English word, except three times, when it appears as "broad places," or "ways." Probably it should always be translated thus, its meaning and its manifest preponderant use being "an open space" (ch. xxxii. 6). So Revised Version: *Into the broad place on the east,* i.e. an open area east of the temple.

Ver. 5.—Sanctify . . . yourselves; Hebrew, הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ. Note the *absence* of any such direction in 1 Chron. xiii., and see ch. xv 11—14, with our note on ver. 12 in particular. **The filthiness;** Hebrew, אֶת־הַנִּדָּה. This word occurs twenty-seven times, and is rendered "separation" fifteen times, "flowers" twice "put apart" three times.

"uncleanness" or "filthiness" six times, and "menstruous" once. The term, therefore, is among the strongest that could be used, and glances probably at the abominations, of whatsoever sort, that Ahaz's idolatries had entailed (comp. ver. 16).

Ver. 7.—This verse is the answering echo of ch. xxviii. 24.

Ver. 8.—**Wherefore the wrath.** As illustrated by the defeats and humiliations suffered at the hands of Pekah and Hazael, the Philistines and Edomites, and the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser. **To trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing.** Three words, carrying each a volume of meaning, and charged with the most powerful and painful of reminiscence (Deut. xxviii. 25, 28, 32 [*observe our ver.* 9], 37, 46, 65, 66). The Hebrew word for "hissing" (שְׁרֵקָה) occurs, besides, five times in Jeremiah (xix. 8; xxv. 9, 18; xxix. 18; li. 37), and once in the contemporary Prophet Micah (vi. 16; comp. Jer. xxvi. 18).

Ver. 9.—(See ch. xxviii. 5, 8, 17.)

Ver. 10.—**To make a covenant**; Hebrew, לִכְרוֹת בְּרִית (see ch. xv. 12, and our note there).

Ver. 11.—**Be not now negligent**; Hebrew, אַל־תִּשָּׁלוּ. This verb in kal (supposing it the same verb) occurs but five times (Job iii. 26; xii. 6; Ps. cxxii. 6; Jer. xii. 1; Lam. i. 5), the radical idea of it being the safety of ease or security rather than any absolute safety. In niph. it is found only in this place and in 2 Kings iv. 28, where the rendering of the Authorized Version, "Do not *deceive* me," will easily yield the same essential idea. The derivative adjective (שָׁלֵו) occurs eight times, and always has the same flavour about it (1 Chron. iv. 40; Job xvi. 12; xx. 20; xxi. 23; Ps. lxxiii. 12; Jer. xlix. 31; Ezek. xxiii. 42; Zech. vii. 7). And the derivative nouns (שֶׁלֶו and שַׁלְוָה) occur nine times, and, at any rate, in *almost* every instance evidently carrying the same fundamental idea (Ps. xxx. 6; cxxii. 7; Prov. i. 32; xvii. 1; Jer. xxii. 21; Ezek. xvi. 49; Dan. viii. 25; xi. 21, 24). Our Authorized Version, therefore, sufficiently reproduces the thought of Hezekiah, though perhaps this would more exactly come out of the rendering, "Be not now at ease," *i.e.* sacrifice ease and self-indulgence, etc. **To serve him . . . that ye should minister.** The same verb is used in both these places; so Revised Version, *To minister unto him, and that ye should be his ministers.*

Ver. 12.—**Then the Levites arose.** This verse gives two apiece of the three divisions or "families"—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, "sons of Levi" (1 Chron. vi. 1, 2, 16—20; xxiii. 6, 7, 12, 21, 24; comp. Gen. xlvi. 11; Exod. vi. 16). Though some of the names of this and the following two verses are known, they do not designate, of course, the same persons. Through many a generation of Levites, the same names were, no doubt intentionally, reproduced.

Ver. 13.—**Elizaphan** (Exod. vi. 22). He was chief of the Kohathites in the time of Moses (Numb. iii. 30; comp. 1 Chron. xv. 8). This family, though we do not read why, seems always to have retained a separate existence.

Ver. 14.—**Asaph** (former verse), **Heman, Jeduthun.** These were the chiefs of the singers and musicians (see, again, 1 Chron. vi. 31—33, 39; xxv. 1—7; ch. v. 12).

Ver. 15.—**By the words of the Lord.** The Hebrew here (בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה) may possibly mean, "in the business of Jehovah," upon which King Hezekiah was now intent. But it is not by any means needful so to understand it. The words or commands of the Lord are such as are written in Exod. xix. 22; Lev. xi. 44.

Ver. 16.—**The inner part.** That is to say, only the priests were warranted to enter inside the temple, while the Levites' sphere of work and service lay in the courts and round about the temple. **Kidron**, as we have seen (note ch. xxvii. 3), lay on the east of the temple mount.

Ver. 17.—**They began . . . to sanctify.** This is not the hithp. conjugation (ver. 5), and the whole verse probably purports to speak only of the sanctification of *things*, not of the self-sanctifying of the official persons, which, whether it occupied longer or shorter time, had been already done. The sanctifying of all outside, then, to the threshold, or porch, took eight days. So, manifestly, should be rendered, in the *vau* here found, *and*. The sanctifying of the interior occupied another eight days, and the legitimate feast-day of the Passover, viz. *the fourteenth* day of Nisan, became overlapped by two days. Nevertheless, many may have observed the Passover on its strict date.

Ver. 18.—This and the following verse purport to say that, while all "filthiness" had been swept out and away to Kidron's dark waters, all that had been polluted of the proper furniture of the temple and its worship had now been cleansed and sanctified by those who had been entrusted with the work, and likewise that things misplaced and removed had been replaced, also after cleansing and sanctifying. This is the happy report that the priests bring now to Hezekiah (ch. xxviii. 24; 2 Kings xvi. 14).

Ver. 20.—**The rulers of the city** are its chief citizens—Hebrew, שָׂרֵי הָעִיר (ch. xxiv. 17; xxx. 1—4)—who bring contributions of sacrificial victims, the word being generally rendered "princes."

Ver. 21.—There is diversity of opinion, whether the seven bullocks (פָּרִים), seven rams (אֵילִים), seven lambs (כְּבָשִׂים) were *burnt* offering (עוֹלָה), or, with the seven he-goats (צְפִירֵי עִזִּים), were *sin* offering (חַטָּאת). Some think (as, for instance, Canon Rawlinson) that they were sin offering, as the account of the offering of them (ver. 22) takes priority for them over the he-goats; others (as Bertheau, Professor J. G. Murphy, etc.), that they were certainly burnt offering. It scarcely appears as though much stress can be laid upon what is apparently the chief reason of Canon Rawlinson's opinion, in face of the immediate language of the last sentence of our ver. 24, "for the king commended the burnt offering and the sin offering for all Israel." The fact of *no* mention of *burnt* offering in our present verse, and of the natural construction of the description, "for a sin offering for the kingdom," etc., as applying to *all* that had preceded, seems the better argument, and all that is necessary, unless something moderately decisive be forthcoming to rebut it. The solution of all, however, is probably to our hand in Ezra viii. 35, which is a very close and significant parallel to our present verse. The first mention of the sacrifice of פָּרִים, or "young bullocks," is found in Exod. xxiv. 5, and afterwards in Exod. xxix. 1, 3; Lev. iv. 3, etc.; viii. 2, 14, etc. The first mention of the sacrifice of אֵילִים is Gen. xxii. 13; and, after, Exod. xxix. 15—18, 19—21, etc.; Lev. v. 15; viii. 2, 22, etc. The first mention of the sacrifices of the כְּבָשִׂים is Exod. xii. 3—7, and, after, Exod. xxix. 38, etc. The first mention of the sacrifice of צְפִירֵי עִזִּים is the present passage; and, after, Ezra viii. 25. But the mention of sacrifices of goats is found in Lev. i. 10; iii. 12, and often besides. **For the kingdom;** *i.e.* probably for "all that are in authority," viz. the king and rulers, the Hebrew word (מַמְלָכָה) designating here those exercising dominion (1 Kings xi. 11; xiv. 8; 1 Sam. xxviii. 17) rather than the country under dominion (Josh. x. 2; 1 Sam. xxvii. 5). It is, however, possible that allusion to the whole kingdom of Judah and Israel is made here. **For the sanctuary;** *i.e.* those who officiated in holy things. **For Judah;** *i.e.* for all the people.

Ver. 22.—**Received . . . sprinkled.** The sprinkling of the blood marked the expiation (Lev. iv. 7, 18, 30; v. 9; viii. 14, 15; Heb. ix. 12—14, 19—22).

Ver. 23.—**The he-goats for the sin offering.** No preposition "for" is found in the Hebrew text, and the previous noun is in the construct state, שְׂעִירֵי. **Laid their hands.** This signified the supposed laying of sins—the sins of the people—on the head of the animal (Lev. i. 4; iv. 4, etc.).

Ver. 24.—**They made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar;** Revised Version, *and they made a sin offering with their blood*, etc.; Hebrew, piel future of חָטָא. The piel conjugation occurs in all fourteen times—seven times rendered "cleanse;" twice, "purify;" twice, "offer for sin;" once, "purge;" once, as here, "make reconciliation;" and once (Gen. xxxi. 39, "I bare the loss of it"), to "bear loss." This last instance, being the very first occurrence of the word in this conjugation, beautifully harmonizes with the simple and most elementary idea of the doctrine or facts underlying the word. **To make . . . atonement;** Hebrew, לְכַפֵּר, piel infinitive. This word, which in the one kal occurrence of it (Gen. vi. 14) means "to pitch, or cover with pitch," occurs in piel eighty-six times, and is rendered "atone" or "make atonement" sixty-six times, seven times "reconcile" or "make reconciliation," the other renderings being such as "pacify," "purge," "forgive," "cleanse," "be merciful," "put it off," *i.e.* "expiate" (margin). We are so distinctly twice told that these sacrifices were for all Israel, that it may be taken for granted that the desire of Hezekiah was to include the northern kingdom—with which, under Hoshea, in subjection to the Assyrian king, times were now very hard and ominous of the end—in the benefits of the expiatory offerings now made (so see vers. 5, 6, 10—12 of next chapter).

Ver. 25.—(See 1 Chron. xvi. 4; xxi.; xxiii. 5; xxv. 1, 6; xxix. 29; ch. v. 12.)

Ver. 26.—To references of foregoing verse may be added Numb. x. 8; 1 Chron. xv. 24.

Ver. 27.—**Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering.** This verse and the following, with graphic brevity, purport to describe the actual consummating of the preparations rehearsed before, and, as seems most probable, in the significance of the last clause of Ezra viii. 35, already referred to. The whole of the burnt offering was burnt on the altar, but of the sin offering the "fat" alone (Lev. iv. 19).

Ver. 29.—**Bowed;** Hebrew, כָּרְעוּ. Of the force and forcibleness of the verb here employed an idea may be obtained from comparison of Gen. xlix. 9; Numb. xxiv. 9; Judg. v. 27; vii. 6; 1 Kings xix. 18. **Worshipped;** Hebrew, יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ. This verb, on the other hand, proclaims the force, not of the posture of the body merely, but rather of the mind, in the rising degrees of respect, reverence, allegiance, and the *worship* of profound *adoration* paid to him, who is "God over all, blessed for evermore." The scene imaged in this description is indeed spirit-stirring in a high degree.

Ver. 30.—**With the words of David, and of Asaph.** We can scarcely exclude from our thought the impression that loving human reverence for their own past religious helpers of song and music, and enthusiasm for the memory of them, were here glanced at. The king's and the princes' supplementary (moreover) injunction and instruction to the Levites as to what words they should put on their lips. **Asaph the seer.** This is the only place in which Asaph is thus distinctly named *seer*, but it is contained virtually in 1 Chron. xxv. 2; and for the substantive title given to two colleagues, see 1 Chron. xxv. 5; ch. xxxv. 15. *The princes* (see their growing prominence in ch. xxiv. 17; xxviii. 21; xxx. 2, 6, 12, 24; xxxii. 3).

Ver. 31.—**Ye have consecrated yourselves.** The Hebrew text is (with the margin of both Authorised and Revised Versions), "have filled your hands to Jehovah." Our somewhat awkward and somewhat misleading reproduction in English of the Hebrew text is, nevertheless, on the whole defensible. The phrase occurs some seventeen times (Exod. xxviii. 41; xxix. 9, 29, 33, 35; xxxii. 29; Lev. viii. 33; xvi. 32; xxi. 10; Numb. iii. 3; Judg. xvii. 5, 12; 1 Kings xiii. 33; 1 Chron. xxix. 5; ch. xiii. 9; Ezek. xliii. 26), and in some of these instances is most conveniently represented by the rendering "consecrate." The plural noun הַמִּלֻּאִים, or הַמִּלֻּאִם, is found thirteen times, in three of which places it is spoken of "stones to be set," as *e.g.* "for" or "in the ephod" (Exod. xxv. 7; xxxv. 9, 27; 1 Chron. xxix. 2); and in the other ten, of "consecration," as *e.g.* "a ram of consecration," "the ram of Aaron's consecration" (Exod. xxix. 22, 26, 27, 31, 34; Lev. vii. 37; viii. 22, 28, 29, 31, 33). Some think our text, "Now ye have consecrated yourselves," glances at the sacrifices of a propitiatory sort, which had just been completed; others, that the reference is by *anticipation*—to the fact that the people invited to draw near had, in an honourable, holy, and sincerely devoted way, armed themselves with worthy offerings. The sacrifices and thank offerings were sacrifices "of thank offerings," in the nature of the *peace offerings* (Lev. vii. 11—21, 29—36). The burnt offerings marked the "free heart," inasmuch as there was nothing of them reserved from the consuming of the altar for use. **As many as were of a free heart;** Hebrew, וְכָל־נְדִיב לֵב. Among some sixty occurrences of this word, in its verb, noun, or (as here) adjective form, perhaps the most touching and beautifully expressive is that of Ps. lx. 12, "Uphold me with thy free Spirit." **Sacrifices;** Hebrew, זְבָחִים. This is the plural of זֶבַח—a word that expresses the generic idea, as *e.g.* the *feast of sacrifice*; again, the act of slaying and sacrificing a victim; again, the victim itself; again, those *kinds* of sacrifices that were expiatory or eucharistic, but *not* holocaustic (Lev. vii. 12). *Thank offerings;* Hebrew, תּוֹדוֹת. This word occurs about thirty-two times; in about two-thirds of that number denoting the spiritual acts of giving of thanks, even when accompanied by the figurative idea of "sacrifices" (Ps. lvi. 13; cvii. 22; cxvi. 17), the genuine adoring praise or thanksgiving constituting the sacrifice; and in the other third denoting strictly sacrificial offerings, as several times in Leviticus (vii. 12; xxii. 29) and here. Our ch. xxxiii. 16 classifies these with "peace offerings" (שְׁלָמִים), as do many other passages with "burnt offerings" generally (Judg. xx. 26; xxi. 4; 1 Sam. xiii. 9; 2 Sam. vi. 17; 1 Chron. xvi. 1; xxi. 26).

Ver. 32.—This verse manifestly purports to gauge in some degree the amount of *free-heartedness* present in the nation.

Ver. 33.—**The consecrated things;** Hebrew, הַקֳּדָשִׁים. Not the word just discussed in ver. 31; these are the thank offering sacrifices.

Ver. 34.—Originally, the worshipper who was moved to sacrifice was enjoined to slay, flay, and cut in pieces the victim (Lev. i. 2—6). Later the Levites performed these duties, and on great public occasions, at any rate, the priests themselves. The simple tale of this verse speaks volumes of the state of the ecclesiastical profession and of the ecclesiastical heart at this very time. Into the dishonoured sepulchre already two or three unsuspected and apparently unacknowledged chinks had let in reproving light as to this, and very lately the almost unavoidable inferences respecting Urijah (see note on our ver. 1, and on ch. xxviii. 24, compared with 2 Kings xvi. 10—16) served the same purpose. How true to nature and to history, both secular and ecclesiastical also, the superiority, in sincerity and life and preparation for work, of the subordinates (the Levites), to those who fed on dignity rather than maintained it, in the highest sense, by religious life and conscientious practice!

Ver. 35.—**And the drink offerings for every burnt offering.** The "drink offerings" (נְסָכִים) have not been mentioned before in this chapter. Of these libations of wine and oil, the most particular account is given in Numb. xv. 5—10, 24). The first scriptural mention of them occurs in Gen. xxxv. 14; followed by Exod. xxix. 40, 41; xxx. 9; Lev. xxiii. 13, 18, 37; Numb. vi. 15, 17, etc.

Ver. 36.—(Comp. Prov. xvi. 1.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—36.—*The reformation of Hezekiah—"the thing done suddenly."* Hezekiah was the thirteenth of the twenty kings of the line of Judah; but when his reign of twenty-nine years had run to its end, as many as two hundred and eighty-two years had sped away of the three hundred and ninety-two of the duration of the line up to the date of the Captivity. It may also be remembered that, of the seven reigns following upon that of Hezekiah, two (those of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin) lasted only three months each. Something, no doubt, is to be learned from the comparative lengths of the lives of individuals, of kings with their reigns, and of nations. Some solemn law, no doubt, obtains, which, however, especially as regards the first, is to a very great degree simply inscrutable. We can only think with wonder, awe, and the resignation of adoring submission, of the young, the beautiful, the useful, and the most promising and loved being so often taken away, while so many all the reverse remain. We never less dogmatize than when our thought dwells with this mysterious and veiled theme. We are especially helpless to pursue it, to any detail, or in its *minutiæ* and its individual examples. We know that we are even then in the presence of the sovereign Arbiter of life and, what we call, death. One profoundest truth is rather afresh brought to our recollection, than by any means for the first time taught us hereby, viz. that all life and all things here are but a part—ay, and that a small part—of a vaster scene, vaster scheme, and one measureless for the ken of our present mental horizon. Another probably reliable impression made on us is, not only that time makes for goodness, even in the present shorter and sharper conflicts of good and evil, but that the slower growth of goodness, as compared with the frequently gigantic strides of evil, is providentially *calculated* for, where often it is simply impossible to us to trace it. The unredeemed evil of Ahaz and his sixteen years, while these lasted, is reduced in its proportions, when viewed as the work of sixteen out of forty-five years, the balance of which was made up of the twenty-nine of Hezekiah. The present chapter, however, of the reign and work of Hezekiah, is itself the account of—

I. Swift work. "The thing that was done suddenly," *i.e.* promptly, and with the promptness that indicated that the doer of it felt it to be such as could not permit nor brook delay. The "suddenness" was no doubt praiseworthy on the part of Hezekiah, and it was a testimony to this, and an encouragement to all imitators of it, that God sanctioned the suddenness, and let nothing fall to the ground because of it, in that he directly contributed to the work and soundness of the whole result by "preparing the people," *i.e.* disposing their hearts to every good word and work required. Swift and *slight* work for God is the very last to secure his approval and help; but swift and *earnest* work, because the "days are few and evil," will have his gracious pardon in respect of many a too probable defect, and with pardon his assisting and preventing help.

II. The practical work of cleansing. Priests and Levites cleanse themselves; and then the house of God, the altar and all its vessels, the table of shewbread and all its vessels. This was outer work, but not only such; for with an urgency and zeal which proved it but the expression of deep inner conviction, it was pressed on priests and Levites, and also executed by them. King Hezekiah, for the time preacher and prophet, takes the right means to influence these to whom he speaks, that their outward work may go on right motives, and spring from depth of conviction, and be the likelier to be continuous and sustained. He calls their attention plainly to the evil of the ways that had been the ways of the kingdom now these sixteen years, and calls that evil by its right name. It *is evil*, and it is trespass; and it is "forsaking" God; and it is "turning the face from his habitation, and turning the back" to it; it has involved the criminality and horror of "temple doors shut," of the "perpetual lamp" being made a lie to its own most sacred name, of "incense" refusing its fragrant ascending to heaven, and "altar of burnt offering" a pitiable blank! Hezekiah challenges them to deny that all the suffering of these years past is *punishment*—plain punishment from the just "wrath of the Lord." And punishment it *was*, as *e.g.* the being "delivered over to trouble, and astonishment, and hissing;" and with the fresh memories of "fathers fallen by the sword, and of sons, daughters, and wives" being at this time "in captivity."

Hezekiah leads the way in lifting the courage, which the terrible retrospect might well go to quench; he tells them of the covenant that he, for his part, purposes "in his heart" and proposes; and, with warm, loving exhortation, entreats their hearty and diligent assent and consent, their "not negligent" co-operation, with solemn record of their election and, so to say, ordination vows. This, at all events, looks like an earnest endeavour to repair in the "sixteen days" the evils of the past "sixteen years." For Hezekiah remembers that

> "Delay is dangerous, sleep disease;
> And few that slumber, wake."

III. THE DEVOUT REMEMBRANCE AND REHEARSING CELEBRATION OF ATONING BLOOD AND THE SPRINKLING THEREOF. Call attention to vers. 21—24; and (in ver. 24) especially to the doctrine couched in the words, "to make reconciliation;" and to the stress laid upon the "atonement" and the "sin offering," being said to be for "*all Israel*," as signifying, probably, that Hezekiah's heart yearned again over the schismatic kingdom, and would fain comprehend it within the compass of the blessing of the sacrificial blood.

IV. THE DEVOUT REMEMBRANCE AND EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION OF THE BURNT OFFERING, WITH ALL DUE ACCOMPANIMENTS OF PRAISE, SINGING, MUSIC, AND THE FULL PROFESSIONAL CHOIR. The sin offerings must, with all their significance of penitence and humiliation, and confession of punishment deserved, precede. And it appears that, in full number and with faithfulness, they were offered. But after them, with what surrender of themselves, with what abandon of true and "free heart," did the Israelite who was an Israelite indeed take his burnt offering to the altar and the priest! *Now*, in particular, when the holy worship of the olden and happier times recommenced to the sound of "the song of the Lord . . . with the trumpets and the instruments of David," it was the inspiration of a blessed service indeed. "All the congregation worshipped . . . the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped. . . . And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped." "The service of the house of the Lord was set in order," and "God was in the midst of his people."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The height of opportunity.* To Hezekiah as he ascended the throne of Judah there was presented a very noble opportunity. His father had brought the nation down very low, had left it "naked" to its various enemies, had caused it to incur the sore displeasure of the Lord, had suffered it to reach the very verge of destruction. But he himself was young and strong; he knew what was the secret and what the source of prosperity; he indulged the hope that everything might yet be restored if determination and energy were shown at the right hour. He resolved that, with the help of God, he would be equal to this great emergency, would rise to the height of this noble opportunity; and so he was, and so he did. He had what he needed for it—

I. ALL DUE PREPARATION IN GODLY TRAINING. For, although his father was an apostate from the true faith, and his example was everything that he should avoid, Hezekiah was not without home influences of another and a very different kind. It is a happy inconsistency we often find in bad men that they are willing for their children to receive the good counsel which themselves disregard and perhaps even despise. Whether due to a contemptuous indifference or to a covert fear, they are willing, sometimes even wishful, that their children should receive a godly education. It is highly probable that from his mother, Abijah, he learnt those truths and received those influences which led him to choose the service of God. Probably Isaiah had access to him; and if so, we may be sure he made use of his opportunity. Whoever did teach and train him must have felt amply rewarded in after-years, when Hezekiah rendered such splendid service to his country. There is sometimes done at the mother's knee or in the schoolroom a work for God the full fruits of which are never revealed on earth.

II. SENSIBILITY. As we read the address which Hezekiah delivered to the priests and the Levites (vers. 5—11), we are impressed with the fact that the speaker was a man of no ordinary sensibility. The things which had happened of late had cut him to the heart. His nation's dishonour, the domestic sorrows of the people (ver. 9), the overshadowing of the high displeasure of the Almighty,—all this moved him to pure and deep emotion. He was a man of strong and profound feeling (see also Isa. xxxviii.).

III. Resoluteness. There is reason to think that the ecclesiastical officials were far from being keenly sympathetic with the king in his work of reformation. The priests were quite in the background, and the Levites needed to be exhorted "not to be negligent" (ver. 11). The king himself not only took the initiative, but he brought to the work a firm resoluteness which carried everything before it. "It is in my heart to make a covenant," he said (ver. 10); and it was clear that the young king, although his elders were before him, and although the reins of government were only just in his hand, intended to carry out his purpose. One strong will, especially when it holds a high place and has a right to speak authoritatively, will drive indecision and even half-heartedness before it.

IV. Sagacity. Hezekiah showed a sagacity which may be said to have been "beyond his years." 1. He recognized the right order of procedure. He felt that the first thing to be done was to set the nation right with the God whom they had so seriously offended; and he perceived that the first thing to be done to attain this great end was to purify the profaned house of the Lord. 2. He took the leaders of religion into counsel and co-operation. He called the Levites and the priests together, and energetically addressed them; he appealed to them in the language of piety and of affection (ver. 11). 3. He understood that all reformation must begin with our own hearts. "Sanctify *yourselves,*" he said (ver. 5). It must be the clean hands of the pure heart that cleanse and purify the sanctuary of the Lord.

If *we* would rise to the height of our opportunity we must do these things. 1. *Realize the greatness* of the work before us; be impressed and affected by it; be seriously solemnized by it. It is not the cold or the chill heart that will carry a great work through all obstacles and over all toils to a successful issue. 2. *Give the first place* to the *sacred side* of the matter; feel that we must have God with us in our work; consider well what are its relations to him, and in what way his favour is to be secured. 3. *Make a beginning with ourselves*—"sanctify ourselves" for the work in hand, by self-examination, by a sincere repentance and return unto God, by a solemn and deliberate rededication of ourselves to our Lord and to his service, by earnest and believing prayer, cleanse our own heart and thus be ready for the part we are to take. 4. Co-operate with our fellows to the utmost of our power; not *proudly* consider that we alone are sufficient, nor *selfishly* desire to reserve sacred duty and opportunity for our own hand, nor *contentiously* make it difficult for others to work with us; but gladly and graciously enter into fellowship with our friends and neighbours.—C.

Vers. 12—19.—*Doing duty.* The way in which these Levites received and executed the commission of the king may indicate to us the way in which we should enter upon and discharge our duty.

I. Undertake it in a right spirit. These men "arose" and went forth to do what Hezekiah called upon them to execute. It will not be presuming much if, judging from the account which follows, we conclude that they undertook their work in a spirit of (1) obedience to the king, and (2) devotion to their God. Certainly that would have become them and have honoured them. And that is, undoubtedly, the spirit in which we should go forth to any duty with which we are charged; we should (1) realize our obligation to man—to do what is just and fair toward him; (2) our responsibility to God; for in diligence and fidelity we may do everything unto him also (Col. iii. 23).

II. Be undisturbed by its unpleasantness. This duty laid upon the Levites and upon the priests was not inviting work. To "bring out all the uncleanness" from the temple, and to "carry it out into the brook Kidron," could not be very agreeable occupation. But they did not hesitate to do it. And, indeed, they could not possibly have been better occupied. In that act they were carrying forth a curse; they were bearing away the wrath of their God. They were not merely cleansing an edifice; they were clearing their conscience; they were righting their record in the books of heaven.

No fair hand was doing that week in Jerusalem any work of refinement that more graced its owner than did the hands of those Levites as they stripped the false altar of its clothing, or as they swept the accumulated dust from the courts of the sanctuary. Let us not despise any true work of any kind. Even if it is not of a kind that answers to our taste or to our training; even if it should be uncongenial to our spirit. If it be that work which the emergency requires of us, or if it be that which Divine providence assigns us at the time; if it be that which our Master himself asks of us in order to serve his cause or to help one of his little ones, it is honourable employment, it should be accounted holy in our esteem.

> "Do thy little; though it be
> Dreariness and drudgery.
> They whom Christ apostles made
> Gathered fragments when he bade."

The twelve apostles gathering broken bits of bread and fish, or Paul going about the island of Malta gathering sticks,—in these incidents we have illustrations of the truth that all work which is timely and helpful is work that is honourable and excellent.

III. CALL TO OUR AID EVERY WILLING WORKER. It may be taken that those whose names are given (vers. 12—14) were the foremost in offering themselves for the work required. But they did not propose to do it by themselves; they called in all who would join them (ver. 15), and then, as a strong united band, they set about their task. In the work of the Lord we should engage all who have a heart and a hand to help. We should do so: 1. For the *work's* sake; that it may be more rapidly and more effectually done. 2. For *their* sake; because they will be blessed in their deed, and after it. 3. For *our own* sake; that we may not be overburdened, and may do all that we do more carefully and thoroughly.

IV. KNOW WHEN TO STOP, AND WHEN TO PROCEED; when to draw a boundary-line, and when to cross it. These dutiful Levites understood their duty well. 1. They did not intrude into the priests' domain; they stopped short "at the inner part of the house" (ver. 16). 2. At the same time, they went beyond the actual letter of instruction by "preparing and sanctifying the vessels which Ahaz had cast away," and by bringing these "before the altar of the Lord." It is a great thing to know what are the limits beyond which it is not right or wise for us to go. But it is a still greater thing to have so deep an interest in our work and so fervent a love for our Lord that we are not to be confined to any limits by literal instructions; that we gladly and eagerly go beyond these, if we can only render a larger and fuller service to our Master and to his cause.

V. DO OUR WORK THOROUGHLY AND SPEEDILY. "They sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days" (ver. 17). "We have cleansed *all* the house of the Lord, . . . with *all* the vessels thereof" (ver. 18). To do *all* that is required, leaving nothing undone because it is trivial or because it is not likely to be observed; and to do all without delay, losing no time, accomplishing everything within the days expected of us;—this is the way to do *Christian* work, to do our duty as disciples of Jesus Christ.

VI. HAVE THE DAY OF ACCOUNT IN VIEW. "They went in to Hezekiah the king," etc. (ver. 18). We may not be accountable to any human master; but to a Divine One we are (Rom. xiv. 12; 2 Cor. v. 10). Then "every work" will be "brought into judgment." Let us therefore *labour*, that we may then be "accepted of him."—C.

Vers. 20—24.—*Confession, propitiation, consecration.* By the sacrifices now offered to Jehovah, by the sin offerings and the burnt offerings, the king and the representatives of the people laying their hands upon the heads of the slain animals (ver. 23), three distinct sentiments were expressed, three several spiritual states were passed through—confession of sin, atonement offered for sin, consecration of themselves to the service of God. Here was made the most public and solemn acknowledgment that could be made of the guilt which the nation had incurred by its apostasy; here was an appeal made to the mercy of God in his appointed way of sacrificing the goats and of laying the hand upon their heads; and here was, through the burnt offerings, a formal and deliberate dedication of themselves to Jehovah for the future. These three experiences are the radical and essential experiences through which penitent and godly men must always pass.

I. CONFESSION. Not always, not often national, as on this occasion (text). Not always, not often now, admission of idolatrous reaction. But always *confession of sin*—of departure from God, of the neglect of his holy will, of a rebellious exalting of our will against his, of unlikeness to him in the spirit we have been breathing and in the principles on which we have been acting, of doing or saying or being that which has grieved his Holy Spirit. And our confession of sin is likely to be heard and accepted, not because it is couched in the most approved language, but because it is the most simple and honest utterance of our hearts.

II. PROPITIATION. Not that God asks now of us a sacrifice for sin. There has been "one sacrifice [offered] for sins for ever." *He* is "the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world." But we come to plead that one Sacrifice as offered for *our* sins; we come to God to pray that that one Propitiation may be accepted on *our* behalf. We come to "lay our hand on that dear head" of Christ, the Lamb of God. We ask that the abounding and abiding mercy of God may, for his sake, cover our guilt and rest upon our soul. And thus, by a living faith, we apply and appropriate to ourselves "the common salvation"—that "righteousness which is through the faith of Christ." Thus is our sin "borne away" into the land of utter forgetfulness, and we ourselves are "brought nigh by the blood of Christ."

III. CONSECRATION. The consumption of the entire animal in the burnt offering symbolized the entire consecration of the offerer to the Lord. This was the significance of those offerings now presented (ver. 24). Hezekiah and his people now offered themselves anew unto the Lord God of their fathers. Their sin being purged, themselves having been forgiven and accepted, they dedicated themselves to God for the coming time. With us: 1. Consecration attends our entrance upon the Divine life; when we seek the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, we "yield ourselves unto God as those alive from the dead." 2. Consecration is a spiritual act continually renewed. It should be an act in which we offer to our Divine Redeemer our whole selves; (1) our entire nature (body and spirit); (2) our whole life, thenceforwards—at all times, in every sphere, under all conditions.—C.

Vers. 26—36.—*The public worship of God.* The record of the latter part of the proceedings on this solemn occasion at Jerusalem may well suggest to us some aspects of public worship at all times.

I. ANTICIPATIVE SERVICE. David, who lived several generations before, had his hand in that good work. The Levites played with "the instruments of David King of Israel" (ver. 27); and they "sang praise with the words of David and of Asaph" (ver. 30). A very great and admirable service have those men rendered to Christian worship who have written hymns that are sung in all the Churches. In the words which they have given us, sweet and strong, our hearts ascend to God in adoration, are poured forth in praise, are humbled in confession, renew their vows in glad self-surrender. Few men have rendered their race a truer or greater service than those who have thus contributed to the worship of many generations.

II. THE SERVICE OF SACRED SONG. "And the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded." This part was rendered by the Levites, and no doubt it did much to brighten the engagements of that hallowed time. "The service of song in the house of the Lord" constitutes a very important part of public worship, for two reasons. 1. Therein and thereby *all* the spiritual attitudes and actions which become us in the near presence of God are expressed—reverence, aspiration, penitence, submission, gratitude, etc. 2. Therein *all* the worshippers can join. It would not have been possible for all those who were in the temple to take audible part in the music and song without discord and confusion. But it is possible, and in every way desirable and delightful, for every voice among us (furnished, as we are, with all appliances) to bring its note of praise to the worship of the Lord. And thus there is ensured or there is facilitated—

III. COMMON PARTICIPATION. In this sacred service, on this great occasion, every one took his part and had his share. "*All* the congregation worshipped" (ver. 28). "The king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped" (ver. 29). It is best when *all* the people can take an audible part in public worship, as in the service of song. They can then and thus more readily enter into the spirit of it. But when this may not be, it is open to every one to take an appreciative and appreciated part by an unbroken, spiritual sympathy with all that is said and done; by an active, intelligent acquiescence, signified by the bowed head or by the final "Amen" when the ministering voice is silent. The unuttered sympathy of all reverent, earnest worshippers is a common participation, which, we may make quite sure, is observed and honoured in heaven.

IV. THE SERVICE OF CONTRIBUTION. "And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings" (ver. 31). The people gave of their own possessions freely as an offering to the Lord. This service of contribution should always be regarded as an integral part of Divine worship. It should be rendered as reverently as an act of prayer or praise. 1. It is—or it should be, as it certainly may be—an offering that comes *from the heart* as well as from the hand. 2. It is an eminently *appropriate* service; for what can be more fitting than that, when and where we are recognizing the fulness and greatness of God's gift to us, we should then and there offer him our humble, grateful gifts in response? 3. It is *acceptable* to the Lord whom we serve (see Mark xii. 41—44; 1 Cor. xvi. 2).

V. REVERENT JOY. "And they sang praises with gladness" (ver. 30); "And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people" (ver. 36). What was more fitted to fill their hearts with overflowing joy than the feeling that they, as a nation, had returned unto the Lord, and had renewed their covenant with him; that he had accepted them; that "his anger was turned away;" that they might now look forward to a time when they would dwell in the light of his countenance and walk in his loving favour? It was an hour for the exuberance of the people's heart, from the heart of the king to that of the humblest citizen of Judah. And there is no time when joy, reverent joy, is more becoming to ourselves than when we are worshipping in the sanctuary of Christ. There we are conscious of our reconcilation to our heavenly Father, in him who is our Divine Saviour; there we feel the nearness of our glorious Redeemer who is "present in the midst of us;" there we pour forth our gratitude and love, and there we renew our happy bonds of holy service unto "him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;" there we realize our substantial and abiding union with all his people, our fellow-citizens in the kingdom and fellow-workers in the vineyard of Christ; and there we anticipate the purer joys and the nobler service of the heavenly land. Sacred joy is the true key-note of the strain when we meet in the sanctuary and engage in the worship of Christ.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The accession of Hezekiah.* I. HIS PERSON. 1. *His name.* Hezekiah, "The might of Jehovah;" Hizkiyah (2 Kings xviii. 1); Hiskiyahu (ver. 1; Isa. xxxvi. 1; xxxvii. 1, 3); with which last corresponds *Hazakijau*, or *Hazakiau*, of the Assyrian inscriptions. 2. *His parentage.* His father Ahaz (ch. xxviii. 27), to whom while yet a lad he must have been born (see homily on ch. xxviii. 1—27); his mother Abijah, "Father of Jehovah"—in shortened form, Abi (2 Kings xviii. 2), the daughter of Zechariah, "a citizen of Jerusalem" (Josephus), perhaps the son of Jeberechiah, a contemporary of Ahaz (Isa. viii. 2), "not improbably the favourite prophet of Uzziah" (Stanley).

II. HIS REIGN. 1. *Its commencement.* (1) When he was twenty-five years old; therefore when, having fully attained to manhood, he was old enough to have learnt something of the ruinous results of his father's career, and of the utter folly as well as wickedness of idolatry. (2) "In the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah, King of Israel" (2 Kings xviii. 1), six years before the carrying away of Israel captive by Shalmaneser, the King of Assyria (2 Kings xviii. 10). (3) When Judah as a kingdom had been reduced to a low ebb by the Syro-Ephraimitish war, with the invasions of the Edomites and Philistines, not to speak of the impoverishment of the royal exchequer by the tributes paid to Tiglath-Pileser (ch. xxviii. 5, 6, 8, 17, 21). "Take out of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin one hundred and twenty thousand whom Pekah, the King of Israel, slew in one day; take out two hundred thousand that were carried away captive to Samaria" (these, however, returned); "take out those that were transported into the bondage of the Edomites, and those that were subdued in the south parts by the Philistines; alas! what a handful was left to the King of Judah, scarce worth the name of a dominion!" (Bishop Hall). 2. *Its close.* After twenty-nine years—upwards of a quarter of a century; a long time for a thoughtful sovereign to bear the responsibilities of a crown, even had the period been peaceful, much more when it was full of trouble and anxiety, both on account of the social and religious degeneracy of his own people, and the threatenings and dangers arising from foreign foes. It was hardly wonderful that Hezekiah's health should have broken down under the intense strain to which it was subjected. 3. *Its contents.* These may be gathered from 2 Kings (xviii.—xx.), 2 Chronicles (xxix.—xxxii.), and Isaiah (xxxvi.—xxxix.). The principal events were: (1) The reformation of religion, commenced in the first (ecclesiastical) month of the first year of his reign, by opening and purifying the temple (ch. xxix. 3—36), and concluded in the second month by the celebration of a Passover (ch. xxx. 1), and the demolition of heathen altars in Jerusalem (ch. xxx. 13) and throughout the land (ch. xxxi. 1). To this the king was most likely moved by the impressions made upon his mind by the fierce denunciations of Micah, who had already during the two previous reigns been testifying against the moral and spiritual corruption of the people (Micah i.—iii.). "The outward reformation was doubtless the expression of an inward change also" (Stanley). (2) The breaking of the yoke of Assyria and the assertion of the nation's independence (2 Kings xviii. 7), with the conducting of a successful campaign against the Philistines (2 Kings xviii. 8), some time before the fourth year of his reign (2 Kings xviii. 9), clearly before the capture of Samaria by the King of Assyria (2 Kings xviii. 10) As the monuments show that the king who commenced the siege of Samaria was Shalmaneser, and the king who finished it was his son Sargon (Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 271), it is more than likely that Hezekiah was moved to revolt by the death of Shalmaneser, B.C. 722. (3) The sickness of Hezekiah in his fourteenth year, with the gracious prolongation of his life for fifteen more years (ch. xxxii. 24—26; 2 Kings xx. 1—11; Isa. xxxviii. 1—22). (4) The imprudent reception of Merodach-Baladan's ambassadors, who had been sent ostensibly to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery, but really to obtain his assistance against Sargon of Assyria (ch. xxxii. 31; 2 Kings xx. 12; Isa. xxxix. 1). (5) The conquest of Judah and the capture of Jerusalem by Sargon, in Hezekiah's fourteenth year, not mentioned by the Chronicler or the author of the Kings, but described by Isaiah (x., xi.), who represents an Assyrian monarch as first conquering Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arphad, Damascus, and Samaria, and then advancing towards Jerusalem "by the usual high-road from the north-east, and halting at Nob, only an hour's journey distant from Jerusalem, in which also (cf. ch. xxii.) the prophet presents the picture of a siege which has already lasted some time, and which can only be explained by Sargon" (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 139). This conquest of Judah, the monuments show, was carried out in connection with Sargon's expedition against Ashdod, which he entrusted to his tartan, or commander (Isa. xx. 1), while he himself "overran the 'widespreading land of Judah,' and captured its capital" (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 137; cf. G. Smith's 'Assyrian Discoveries,' pp. 288—293). (6) The fortification of Jerusalem in anticipation of the above attack upon his capital, not by Sennacherib (ch. xxxii. 1—8), but by Sargon. (7) The invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, not in Hezekiah's fourteenth (2 Kings xviii. 13—16), but in his twenty-fourth year, since, according to the monuments, Sargon was murdered in B.C. 705, while Sennacherib's campaign against Syria and the West did not begin till B.C. 701. (8) The submission of Hezekiah to Sennacherib at Lachish (2 Kings xviii. 14—16). (9) The siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib's captains, Tartan, Rabshakeh, and Rabsaris (ch. xxxii. 9—22; 2 Kings xviii. 17—xix. 36; Isa. xxxvi. 2—xxxvii. 37). (10) The reception of a blasphemous letter from Sennacherib, with the prayer to which it led (ch. xxxii. 20; 2 Kings xix. 8—34; Isa. xxxvii. 8—35). (11) The destruction of Sennacherib's army (ch. xxxii. 21; 2 Kings xix. 35; Isa. xxxvii. 36). (12) The extension of Hezekiah's fame in consequence of this deliverance (ch. xxxii. 23).

III. HIS CHARACTER. 1. *Good.* "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done" (ver. 2). With this agrees the testimony of 2 Kings (xviii. 5, 6), that his piety (1) sprang from the right root—faith: "he trusted in the Lord God of Israel·" (2) evinced the right quality—constancy: "he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him;" and (3) produced the right fruit—obedience: "he kept the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses." The causes which led to Hezekiah's conversion were doubtless manifold: (1) Divine grace, without which no change of heart or life can be permanently good (John iii. 7;

1 Cor. xv. 10); (2) prophetic instruction, given by Isaiah (xxxvii. 2), Micah, Jeremiah (xxvi. 18, 19), and Zechariah, his maternal grandfather—no lasting transformation being effected on the mind or character except through the medium of the truth (Ps. xix. 7; cxix. 9; Micah ii. 7; John xv. 3); and (3) personal observation of the sinfulness and ruinous consequences of idolatry. 2. *Energetic.* Sufficiently apparent from the above-recited record of his life. Besides being a pious sovereign, he was a military commander of pronounced skill and undaunted courage (ch. xxxii. 3—8), a wise and judicious civil administrator (ch. xxxii. 27—30), a zealous and unwearied religious reformer (ch. xxix.—xxxi.), a student and patron of letters (Prov. xxv. 1), an antiquarian and a poet (ch. xxxii. 27; 2 Kings xxiii. 12; Isa. xxxviii. 9—20). In short, Hezekiah was "one of the most splendid princes that ever adorned the throne of David, and whose reign of nine and twenty years exhibits an almost unclouded picture of persistent struggles against the most embarrassed and difficult circumstances, crowned with elevating victories" (Ewald, 'History of Israel,' iv. 172).

Learn: 1. That Divine grace is stronger than hereditary corruption. 2. That God can raise up great men when such are demanded by the times. 3. That the hidden root of all true nobility in man is faith in God, and steadfast adherence to truth and right.—W.

Vers. 3—19.—*The purification of the temple.* I. THE GATHERING OF THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES. (Ver. 4.) 1. *When?* In the first year of the king's reign, in the first month (vers. 3, 17), but whether of that reign (Caspari) or of the ecclesiastical year (Bertheau, Keil, Jamieson, Oehler in Herzog) cannot be determined. In either case it was not long after his accession. The acts evinced (1) piety, the king giving his first thoughts to religion (Matt. vi. 33); and (2) prudence, since a good work never can be too soon begun, and reformations may be wrought at the beginning of a reign that cannot be so easily effected afterwards. "As the spring-time of nature or of the year is the most suitable season for purging natural bodies, so is the spring-time of a reign the best time for purging the body politic" (Bacon). 2. *Where?* In "the broad place on the east;" either the inner court of the temple (Bertheau), or the open space in front of the temple towards the east (Keil), which will depend upon whether the doors of the temple had been opened prior to the assembling of the priests. 3. *Why?* To invite their co-operation in the work of cleansing the sanctuary Ahaz had shut up (ch. xxviii. 24), and of re-establishing the worship Ahaz had abolished. For these purposes and as a preliminary thereto, according to one view, the king had already opened the temple doors; according to another, he only did so when the work of cleansing commenced.

II. THE WORDS ADDRESSED TO THEM BY THE KING. (Vers. 5—11.) Hezekiah regarding them without distinction as Levites—not speaking to the Levites as distinguished from the priests, as if these were not present, though they certainly (ver. 34) "hung back from the revolution which swept away the neglect which the head of their order, Urijah, must in some measure have countenanced" (Stanley, 'Lectures on the Jewish Church,' vol. ii. p. 465), and, exhorting them with fatherly affection (ver. 11), set before them three things. 1. *The work which required to be done.* (1) The sanctification of themselves, without which they could not enter on such service as that to which he was about to invite them (Exod. xix. 10—12; Lev. xi. 44). This sanctification was doubtless carried out formally by the offering of sacrifice, by washing and putting on clean garments, and perhaps by anointing with oil (Lev. viii. 1—7, 30); inwardly by acts of spiritual heart devotion and dedication to the work about to be performed, and to him whose work it was. (2) The sanctification of the house of the Lord; or, the carrying forth of the filthiness that had accumulated therein since the day when its doors were closed, the burnishing of all the utensils that had been left to rust through disuse, and the replacing of all the sacred vessels which had been cast away. Without this the true national Jehovah-worship could not be reinstituted. In this everything must proceed according to the pattern prescribed by the Law. (3) The two things symbolized what is needful to constitute true worship under the better dispensation of the gospel—in the worshipper, faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, renewal of heart and mind in the laver of regeneration, personal separation from all known sin; in the worship, purity, beauty, completeness. 2. *The reasons why it* *needed to be done.* (1) Because, through the wickedness of their fathers in forsaking God, the temple had fallen into disrepair; its doors had been closed, its lamps put out, its altars left without offerings (vers. 6, 7). What their fathers then had done it became them to undo. Unless they would be sharers in their fathers' guilt, they must separate themselves from their fathers' sin. Their fathers' trespass would not condemn them if they disowned it by acting differently. (2) Because on account of this wickedness the wrath of God had fallen upon the nation, "upon Judah and Jerusalem," upon the inhabitants of the cities and of the metropolis; their troops had been slaughtered in the field (ch. xxviii. 6), their sons and wives and daughters carried into captivity (ch. xxviii. 5, 8), their country delivered to trouble, to astonishment, to hissing. (3) Because it was the king's intention, in restoring the ancient worship of Jehovah, to renew the covenant between himself with his people and Jehovah (ver. 10), as had formerly been done by Joash and his subjects (ch. xxiii. 16), and earlier by Asa and his warriors (ch. xv. 12)—being moved to this by the consideration that not otherwise could they escape the fierce wrath their national apostasy had kindled against them. 3. *The argument why they should do the work.* The Lord had selected them to be his temple ministers—the Levites and priests together to stand before him and serve him, the priests to burn incense upon his altar. (N.B.—This is an indirect proof that "Levites" in ver. 5 includes the "priests.") Hence (1) faithfulness should lead them to do the work specially assigned them, and (2) honour impel them, seeing Jehovah had chosen them, rather than others, to be his ministers.

III. THE RESPONSE GIVEN BY THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES TO THE KING. (Vers. 12—16.) 1. *The absent members of the order were collected.* Fourteen Levites had heard the king's speech—two from each of the great families of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari; two of the sons of Elizaphan, the son of Uzziel, the son of Kohath (Exod. vi. 18), and in Moses' time the head of the family of Kohath (Numb. iii. 30); two of the sons of Asaph, who belonged to the family of Gershon; and two of the sons of Heman, who again proceeded from the family of Kohath; and two of the sons of Jeduthun, an offshoot from the family of Merari (on these names see Exposition). Responding with alacrity and gladness to the king's summons, they went forth and mustered the whole body of their brethren in Jerusalem. The work to which they had been called should be done by a united body, all hands and one heart—a good model for the Christian Church. 2. *The duty of personal sanctification was scrupulously attended to.* God's work must be done in God's way; always with fear and trembling, never with irreverent presumption; always in the beauty of holiness, never in the uncleanness of sin. 3. *The work was divided between the Levites and the priests.* To each was assigned that for which he was qualified and had been appointed; the cleansing of the temple proper to the priests, since these alone could enter the holy place; the removal of that which the priests brought from the interior of the sanctuary into the porch to the Levites, who bore it thence to the brook Kidron, which flowed through the valley of Jehoshaphat, on the east of the temple hill. So should all in the Christian work be content to do the work to which they are called, and for which they are qualified. As all have not the same gifts, so all are not intended for the same spheres of Christian activity. 4. *The work was carried on until it was completed.* It began with the purification of the buildings exterior to the temple, which occupied eight days. In eight days more they had finished the temple proper, both the porch and the sanctuary. On the sixteenth day they made an end. How much good work is begun by Christian people without being ended! How many become weary in well-doing before they have half completed what they have put their hands to! 5. *A report of the work done was carried to the king.* The whole house of the Lord had been cleansed, all its furniture and utensils purified, the vessels found wanting replaced.

Learn: 1. That God can be worshipped only in the beauty of holiness. 2. That as God calls none of his servants to uncleanness, he can be served only by the clean. 3. That God's house—whether heart or church—should be studiously guarded against defilement. 4. That God's people, like God himself, should be unwearied in doing good. 5. That God's servants must one day render to him an account of their works.—W.

Vers. 20—36.—*The re-dedication of the temple.* I. THE TIME OF THE CEREMONY. Early on the following morning. Hezekiah lost not a moment in entering upon the good work his heart contemplated (ver. 10), rising up with next day's dawn, gathering the rulers of the city, and proceeding with them to the house of the Lord. In this he acted in accordance with Jehovah's instructions to Moses at Sinai (Exod. xxxiv. 2); with the example of Abraham (Gen. xxii. 2), Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 18), Moses (Exod. xxiv. 4), Joshua (iii. 1), Job (i. 5), and other good men who selected the morning hours for executing good resolutions, and especially for acts of devotion; with the practice of God himself, who had been ever forward in blessing his people by sending to them his messengers the prophets (ch. xxxvi. 15; Jer. vii. 13, 25; xxv. 3, 4). Perhaps Hezekiah also felt that if wicked men rose up with the dawn and even "prevented" the daylight in order to prosecute their nefarious works (Job xxiv. 14), yea, that his own subjects had risen up early to corrupt themselves (Zeph. iii. 7), much more ought he to bestir himself and awake up early to begin the splendid work of temple-dedication on which he had resolved.

II. THE PARTIES TO THE CEREMONY. 1. *The king himself.* Hezekiah, as the vicegerent of Jehovah and head of Jehovah's people, led the way. This the sort of kingship after which sovereigns should aspire—kingship in works of faith and labours of love. 2. *The princes of the city*—again, in their individual capacities and in their representative characters—joined in the ceremonial. So had they done at Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 11), and in the wilderness (Numb. xxi. 18); in the days of Solomon (ch. v. 2), and in those of Jehoiada (ch. xxiii. 20). Happy is that nation whose nobility are ever foremost in noble deeds! 3. *The priests and the Levites* were present to do their respective offices, to sacrifice upon the altars of Jehovah, and to play upon the instruments of David; two necessary parts in all Old Testament worship—the former to make atonement, the latter to express that which should ever be its fruit (Rom. v. 11). 4. *The people,* or a portion of them, were there as assenting parties to the transaction.

III. THE STEPS IN THE CEREMONY. 1. *The presentation of sacrifice.* (1) Burnt offerings. Seven bullocks, seven rams, and seven lambs were slain in succession upon the altar in the fore court, the blood of the slain victims being caught up by the priests in a basin and sprinkled on the altar, while their carcases were retained to be consumed by fire upon the altar after all the other victims had been slain. (2) Sin offerings. Seven he-goats were next presented before the king and the congregation, the priests' hands laid upon them—if not with formal confession of sin, at least symbolizing its transference to the animals—their lives taken, and their blood sprinkled by the priests upon the altar. This done, the carcases of the burnt offerings were consumed by fire. 2. *The accompaniment of music.* Hezekiah reinstituted the Levitical service of music, according to the Divine ordinance communicated through David, Gad, and Nathan (1 Chron. xxiii. 5); and on this particular occasion "he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps;" and "the priests with the trumpets" (1 Chron. xv. 16, 24). When the burnt offering began, *i.e.* either when the slaying of the victims commenced, or when the carcases were lifted to the altar to be consumed, the temple courts rang with the strains of instrumental and vocal music —"the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded"—until the offering was finished, until the last ember died upon the altar, and the last wreath of smoke vanished in the air. Meanwhile the congregation, standing round in the court as spectators, "worshipped."

IV. THE MEANING OF THE CEREMONY. 1. *Confession of sin.* This idea was generally comprehended in the presentation of sin offerings, and particularly set forth in the imposition of the officiating priest's hands upon the victim's head. The sin thus confessed was the sin of the nation as represented by its royal house, its sanctuary, and its people. All of these, the occupants of the throne and the members of the royal family, the ministers of the sanctuary, the priestly order and the Levitical alike, the common people of the realm, both in Israel and in Judah, had been guilty of trespass and apostasy. 2. *Propitiation for guilt.* The blood of the sin offering, when poured out before and sprinkled on the horns of the altar—in particular when done in the holy of holies—was designed to make atonement for the people's sins, to cover up from the eyes of a holy God the wickedness of which they had been guilty, and so to reconcile them to God (Lev. vi. 30). 3. *Expression of self-surrender.* This was symbolized by the burning of the carcases of both the sin and the burnt offerings. As the bodies of the animals whose blood had been brought within the sanctuary for reconciliation were all devoted to Heaven or given up as food to Jehovah, so the nation whose guilt had been put away by that same blood of atonement surrendered itself to Jehovah to be consumed by the fire of a new zeal for his glory 4. *Utterance of thanksgiving.* This the significance of the musical accompaniment to the sacrificial ritual. It gave an outlet to the gratitude and joy of the reconciled and pardoned worshipper.

V. THE CLOSE OF THE CEREMONY. 1. *A national act of worship.* "The king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped" (ver. 29). It was worship of the right sort: (1) unanimous—sovereign and subjects were of one mind; (2) humble—they bowed themselves; (3) joyous—they sang praises to the Lord, the Levites leading, in the words of David and Asaph. 2. *A royal word of invitation.* "Hezekiah answered and said" (ver. 31)—declaring the fact of their consecration to Jehovah, and desiring them to show their acquiescence in the same by personal acts of worship and sacrifice—"Come near, and bring sacrifices and thank offerings unto the Lord." Practice the best vindication of profession (Jas. ii. 14); obedience the only true justification of faith (Rom. xvi. 19); the sacrifice of one's wealth the most reliable index that one has consecrated his heart. 3. *A popular outburst of liberality.* "The congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings." (1) Promptly, on the spot, without delay, as if they had been only waiting for such an invitation. It is well to be prepared for giving before the opportunity of giving comes. Preparation makes giving easy (1 Cor. xvi. 2). (2) Freely: "as many as were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings." Considering the number of these latter, the people generally must have been well disposed towards the movement. Voluntariness indispensable to all acceptable religious giving (2 Cor. viii. 12). (3) Largely: "the number of the burnt offerings was seventy bullocks, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs," while "the consecrated things," or other offerings, "were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep." Indeed, so abundant were the sacrificial victims that the few priests who had taken part in the ceremonial were unable to cope with the task of preparing them for the altar, and had to call in the assistance of the Levites until more priests were sanctified. Extraordinary emergencies in Church as in state call for and allow extraordinary measures. Where the services of unordained pastors and teachers cannot be obtained, those of unordained may be lawfully employed. Cf. the liberality exemplified by the Israelites at the erection of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxv. 21—29; Numb. vii. 1—89; xxxi. 48—54) and the temple (1 Chron. xxix. 6—9, 16, 17).

LESSONS. 1. Union is strength, in religion as in other things. 2. The inspiration of all acts connected with religion should be the glory of God. 3. In religion all things are of God, the preparation of the heart no less than the direction of the hand.—W.

Ver. 31.—*The revival of religion in Church or state.* I. PREPARATORY STEPS. In order to secure such an awakening of religious life as took place in Judah under Hezekiah, three things are indispensable. 1. *Confession of sin.* "Our fathers have trespassed," etc. (ver. 6). As all religion begins with saying, "Father, I have sinned" (Luke xv. 18), so the first symptoms of reviving life in souls that have been apathetic is acknowledgment of their trespass (Ps. li. 3). 2. *Cleansing of the sanctuary.* "We have cleansed all the house of the Lord" (ver. 18). As the visible Church is a temple of the Lord (Ps. cxxxii. 14; Matt. xviii. 20; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Heb. iii. 6), this may symbolize the removing from its doctrine, worship, and practice of everything that is contrary to the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scriptures; and again, as the individual heart is a habitation of the living God (1 Cor. vi. 19), it may suggest the duty of purging it from every known sin (2 Cor. vii. 1). 3. *Renewal of the covenant.* "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel" (ver. 10); and the same must be done by all, whether communities or individuals, who would experience a quickening in their religious life. Unnecessary now, as in the days of Hezekiah, to offer slain victims and make propitiation for sin, that having been done once for all by Jesus Christ (Heb. ix. 11—14), it is still indispensable to appropriate the reconciliation and make the self-surrender to which Hezekiah's offerings pointed.

II. CERTAIN RESULTS. A revived condition of the religious life of either Church or individual will discover itself in three things, as it did with Hezekiah and his people.

1. *Self-consecration.* Already expressed in the act of covenant-making, this will reveal itself in the life that proceeds therefrom. Christian individuals in the Church, recognizing themselves to be not their own, but bought with a price, will lay themselves upon the altar as a willing sacrifice (Rom. xii. 1). 2. *Gladness.* "And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang," etc. (ver. 28). Joy an invariable accompaniment of a revived condition of religion in the soul or in the Church (Ps. cxlix. 2, 5; Isa. lxv. 14, 18; Hab. iii. 18; Eph. v. 18; 1 John i. 4). 3. *Liberality.* "And the congregation brought in sacrifices," etc. (ver. 31). Generosity in giving almost necessarily follows on a heightened experience of Divine grace. "Freely ye have received, freely give."—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXX.

This chapter contains the account of Hezekiah's arrangements after the restoration for the observance of the Passover—arrangements more than ordinarily interesting to notice in respect of, *first*, the unusual time appointed for the celebration; and, *second*, the determined and brave attempt of the good king to win again to the worship of Jerusalem (though, as was no doubt anticipated, it subjected his royal proffers to scorn, ver. 10) the separated people of "all Israel" (vers. 1—12); and further, the celebration itself, the happy omen (ver. 14) with which it opened, its duration; and certain several other incidents attending it (vers. 13—27).

Ver. 1.—**Hezekiah sent . . . wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh.** Some have sought to bring into the appearance of harmony the two first clauses of this verse by supposing that the former clause purports to say that Hezekiah sent messengers to all Israel and Judah, and in particular letters in addition to Ephraim and Manasseh, the chief tribes of the northern kingdom and the Joseph tribes. Vers. 6 and 10, however, seem to dispose effectually of this offer of explanation; while another explanation, that the names of the two tribes are simply to be taken as equivalent to "all Israel," seems true, though, in fact, it may be to advance us no way at all. We should prefer in the difficulty, unimportant though it is, yet one facing us, rather to assume that the verse wishes to say that Hezekiah *sent* (*i.e.* sent messengers, which prove to be the *runners*, rendered the "posts") to all Israel and Judah, and to Ephraim, Manasseh, and the rest of their allied tribes by implication, but not to Judah wrote letters also which were carried by the posts (or runners). It is true that ver. 6 may negative even this conjecture for getting over the difficulty, but *not* necessarily so, for it only says that the posts went throughout Israel and Judah with the letters, which they may be supposed to have dropped only to some, not to all, and those some *Israel*, or Ephraim, Manasseh, and brethren. There will have been to hand other, the usual methods of communication with Judah, from Jerusalem its metropolis, and from its king. The thing *different* from "letters" that was circulated may have been just the "proclamation" of ver. 5. It has been suggested that the now King of Israel, Hoshea, was very probably a captive of Assyria at this exact time (2 Kings xvii. 4).

Ver. 2.—This and the following verse are well explained by Numb. ix. 6—13, where the particular instance of the "defilement by a dead body" simply exemplified other legitimate instances of defilement or non-sanctification (ch. xxix. 5, 15, 34), and where absence on a journey similarly exemplified other unavoidable absence.

Ver. 3.—**At that time.** The words seem like a reminiscence of the "at that day," twice occurring in ver. 6 of Numb. ix. But anyway the meaning is plain "at *the* appointed season."

Ver. 4.—This verse betokens the careful consideration on the part of "king, princes, and all the congregation," that had been given to the distinct question, whether the exact present circumstances legitimately fell under the description of Numb. ix. 6—13; and the issue was that they decided that they *did*, they "ruled the thing right" (וַיִּשַׁר הַדָּבָר).

Ver. 5.—**Of a long time.** Though the idea expressed in this rendering must, under any circumstances, attach to this passage, yet it can scarcely be understood to be given in the one Hebrew word we have here (לָרֹב); out of nearly a hundred and fifty occurrences of the word, and often with its present preposition, this is the solitary occasion of its being turned into a mark of time. The translation should read, *for they had not kept it in multitude*, i.e. in proper multitudes, and in the multitude of an undivided and holy kingdom. The force of the reference lies in the fact just stated, that Hezekiah, ignoring all the worse precedents of now many generations, and ignoring the iniquity of the duality of the kingdom, manfully caused his writ to run from south to north unchecked! **As it was written**; *i.e.* in the book of the Law of Moses. So runs the full and frequent and honoured phrase: כַּכָּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר תּוֹרַת־מֹשֶׁה (2 Kings xiv. 6; 1 Kings ii. 3; Josh. iii. 34; ch. xxxv. 26, etc.).

Ver. 6.—So the posts (see note on ver. 1). **The remnant of you . . . escaped . . . of Assyria.** Hezekiah had, no doubt, already made his account with the fact that the injured and crushed state of the northern kingdom might be of salutary omen for the attempt on his part to bring them to a sense of their past sins, specially perhaps of omission. Of the calamities of Israel, and their captivity in large part, and in the rest subjection by tribute to Assyria, there is clear testimony in 2 Kings xv. 29; xvii. 1—6.

Ver. 7.—A strange and significant snatch of corroborating history is to be found in 1 Chron. v. 23—26.

Ver. 8.—Be ye not stiff-necked (see Deut. 16, 17). **Yield yourselves**; literally, *give the hand* (see 1 Chron. xxix. 24; Ezra x. 19, etc.). **Which he hath sanctified for ever** (see Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14).

Ver. 10.—Through . . . Ephraim and Manasseh. The way in which the names of these two tribes are here used may explain in part the use of them in brief for simple reasons of the convenience of brevity in ver. 1. **They laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.** These two words speak significant description of the exact moral state in which Israel's tribes were now to be found. **Even unto Zebulun.** What of the country lay north of Zebulun had been so wasted by Assyria that practically Zebulun is spoken of as what was most northerly.

Ver. 11.—Adding the tribes of *Ephraim* and *Issachar* mentioned in ver. 18, and bearing in mind the contents of our ver. 7 (with note), we have really only to account for Dan, which was no longer classed with Israel, and Naphtali and Simeon. The probable significance of the passage is not to lay stress upon the tribes represented, but on the scattered, though sparse, attendants at the Passover who came.

Ver. 12.—Also in Judah the hand of God was. Considering the difference of preposition, this expression can perhaps scarcely cite as its parallel Ezra vii. 9. "The hand of God" here means rather his effectual working, which effectual working produced a hearty unanimity, that contrasted well with the bearing of the northern tribes.

Ver. 13.—This verse purports to say that the *total*, at any rate, of the attendance on the Passover was very large.

Ver. 14.—Took away the altars . . . the brook Kidron (see ch. xxviii. 24; xxix. 16).

Ver. 15.—Were ashamed; Hebrew, נִכְלְמוּ. This word, occurring in one conjugation or another thirty-eight times, expresses in every instance a genuine shame. It now was the forerunner of a practical repenting. **And brought in . . . into**; better rendered, *and carried up to the house of the Lord*.

Ver. 16.—They stood in their place after their manner (see Lev. i. 11—13, and many other references in Leviticus).

Ver. 17.—Therefore the Levites had the charge (see Lev. i., etc., which repeatedly affirms that the original directions of Moses were that the person who *brought* the victim to offer it was to slay it, and to bring the blood).

Ver. 18.—So also the original Law of Moses prescribed that the uncleansed must not eat the Passover (Numb. ix. 6).

Ver. 20.—Healed the people. The Hebrew word here is the strict word for physical healing, and is a slight but significant indication of the reality of the spiritual view contemplated in Moses' Law in this matter.

Ver. 21.—See Exod. xii. 18, and many repetitions of the same matter, respecting the duration of the Passover and eating of unleavened bread. **With loud instruments.** Some render this, "instruments *ascribing* might to Jehovah." There seems no necessity for this; and the *plain* Hebrew text is "instruments of might," *i.e.* strong or loud instruments.

Ver. 22.—Spake comfortably; literally, *to the heart of*, etc. **That taught the good knowledge.** This rendering is in some error, and is awkward in not indicating the direction of the *knowledge*. A better rendering (see Revised Version) will be, *who were well skilled* in rendering such service to Jehovah. And perhaps the simplest rendering, "who served with good service to Jehovah," will be the most correct to the real meaning of the Hebrew text (Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. xiii. 15). **Making confession**; *i.e.* the confession or uttering forth of praise (see Ps. lxxv. 2; xcii. 1; 1 Chron. xvi. 4, 7, 35, 41; xxiii. 30; xxv. 3; ch. v. 13; vii. 3, 6; xxxi. 2).

Ver. 23.—This and the following verse should read as one. Hezekiah no doubt wished, by prolonging the feast and the joy, to make the more lasting impression on the people and the more hopeful conversion of them.

Ver. 24.—Did give. This is an inadequate rendering. Revised Version reads, *did give for offerings*; others read, "gave as an *heave* offering." In the light of our ch. xxxv. 7—9, the Revised Version rendering seems sufficient.

Ver. 25.—The strangers. Some consider this describes "proselytes from Israel, who were non-Israelites." But this seems a most gratuitous supposition. The Hebrew גֵרִים does, in fact, purport only "sojourners," and is frequently so translated, and our next clause corroborates this view. The interesting aspect of it is, that probably the persons described had emigrated from their own tribes, as they longed for Jerusalem, "their chief joy."

Ver. 26.—Since the time of Solomon. The reference is to Solomon's "Feast of Tabernacles" (ch. vii. 9).

Ver. 27.—The priests the Levites; *i.e.* the priest-Levites, and not other Levites (Deut. xvii. 18; Josh. iii. 3). The Septuagint, therefore, is wrong in inserting "and." A parallel expression in the New Testament is "Men brethren" (Acts i. 16; ii. 29, etc.). The priests were those authorized to bless (Numb. vi. 23—26; 1 Chron. xxiii. 13).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—27.—*The celebration of the Passover, with its sacred suggestions.* The whole of this chapter is concerned with Hezekiah's call of priests, Levites, princes, and congregation of the people to observe and celebrate with himself the grand solemnity of the Passover. From the analogy of the precedent provided for individual cases of certain kinds of necessity (Numb. ix. 10), this celebration for the whole nation is fixed for the fourteenth day of the second month instead of the first. This was the fourth of the seven special occasions, of which description with detail is given us in Scripture—the first of all in Egypt (Exod. xii.), the first in the desert (Numb. ix.), and that of Joshua at Gilgal, after the circumcision of the people and when the manna ceased (Josh. v.), being the three which preceded; and those that came after being the Passover celebrated by Josiah (ch. xxxv.), by Ezra on the return from the captivity at Babylon (Ezra vi.), and that ever-memorable one, the last of our blessed Lord's life on earth. The Passover was the first in time of the three great annual feasts which called together to Jerusalem all—yes, in happier times, *all*—from Dan even to Beersheba, the other two being the Feasts of Pentecost and of Tabernacles. It was also the first in the *life*time of the nation, and always *the* first in solemn significance. Not only the energy and earnestness, therefore, of Hezekiah in carrying through this celebration from first to last, but his Diviner wisdom and piety in determining and appointing it, may be noted, and dwelt upon in useful and suggestive detail as adapted to modern days. That great revival, for instance—one of the greatest the world and Church have ever seen—of modern Church-life, familiarly known to ourselves, was rooted in, and has grown up proportioned to, zealous attention to the sacraments, faith *in* them, and faithful observance *of* them. This goes to the root of all a nation's evil and malady! "If once," thought Hezekiah—"if but once a healthy breeze could pass over this erring and idolatrous, fevered and long-forlorn people, all might yet be well!" At his prayer, and as the reward of his effort, the breeze came, and swept over the land. It refreshed weary and parched wastes; and some signs of healthiness, mingled with some signs of suspiciousness, appeared. Perhaps all was too late; the disease too deep, and gone too far, too long! Nevertheless, it was none the less right on the part of Hezekiah to have tried the religious means, and used the highest of them. We may notice in them—*not* as matter of historic interest in the life of another nation merely—how, in virtue mainly of the presence of the Passover, they were fitted to touch all that was deepest, all that haply might "remain" (Rev. iii. 2) deepest and best in the hearts of the people. For instance, the Passover was undoubtedly—

I. THE VIVID MEMORIAL OF AN UNPRECEDENTED BIRTH OF A NATION. Nor can it be said that this was an instance of a "nation born in a day." It gives more point, and it is just and true, to remember, that now it may be said of it that it was a nation born *in a night!* One supreme, extraordinary effort of faith and obedience ushered that nation out of darkness into light. It might, indeed, have been hoped that this would stamp it for ever with the corresponding native and hereditary grand qualities. There are senses in which it may be said that the nation had received in yet earlier ages its existence. Certainly the promise and the earnest of this had been fact. The germ of its existence had been in Abraham, and God's covenant with him. It showed to view in distinctness and separateness at the time and on the fact of its compact corporate *descent* into Egypt. There was a semblance of truth to support this, and there would have been real truth in it, if a family could be called a nation. "Israel" went into Egypt "three score and ten souls" (Gen. xlvi. 27); Israel came out of Egypt a nation born, that night of the Passover—a vast separate nation, a peculiar people. Hezekiah's celebration of the Passover, therefore, at this time suggested to every feeling and instinct of honest national love and pride that king, priests, and people should live worthily of their origin, raise the fortunes and restore the glory of the nation that had so greatly declined (ver. 6).

II. THE VIVID MEMORIAL OF THE GREAT DELIVERANCE WHICH GOD WROUGHT FOR HIS PEOPLE, FROM SORE BONDAGE, UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY NATURE. The power and the pity of God were alike demonstrated by the rescue of the hosts of Israel from the midst of Egypt. His pity heard their groanings, his power subdued their oppressors. Of such things as these the people needed at this time the teaching and the inspiriting influences. Every observance of the Passover was a commemoration and rehearsal of this great deliverance, and suggested the long and thick succession of Divine interpositions during a period of now nearly eight centuries.

III. BOTH THE OUTCOME AND THE FOUNDATION OF A COVENANT. The Passover marked a foregoing *faith* and *obedience* on the part of Moses, Aaron, and all the houses of the rescued, and it inferred an unending continuance of the same, so often as they should be called for on special occasions, as well as for the rule of every day's life. Upon these conditions being met on the one side, God's great deliverance and his continued protection took effect on the other side. Upon this practical aspect it is evident that Hezekiah laid great stress (vers. 7—9). The remembrance of the saving of all the firstborn of the Hebrews, by the side of the slaying of all the firstborn of the Egyptians, both man and beast, was fitted to be a most powerful incentive of loyalty to him who had thus bought a people to himself most significantly. This was an inevitable memory of the sprinkled blood of the Paschal lamb in every celebration.

IV. THE FORESHADOWING OF THE ONE ETERNAL SACRIFICE. For the devout Hebrew, the Israelite who was "an Israelite indeed," even in these most degenerate days of the nation, the Passover must have taken a leading share among all other sacrifices, in teaching and shadowing forth "the good things to come;" the "better hope;" the "better covenant;" the "better sacrifices" (Heb. vii. 19, 22; viii. 6; ix. 23). The "foreshadowing" itself was indeed plain and powerful, which used such a designation for the central fact of all the observances of the Passover, as "*my* sacrifice" (Exod. xxiii. 18; xxxiv. 25); and nothing can be deducted from our estimate of the meaning of such passages, and generally of the *typical* virtue of the whole celebration, when we remember the language of St. Paul respecting "Christ our Passover" (1 Cor. v. 7). The *faith* of the people of Israel and their *sacrament* were looking *forward* to *this* Passover, as our faith and *our sacrament* look back to it, and of a truth ever upward! The suggestions that St. Paul awakes within us by the fulness of the last-quoted verse, as well as the time and all the circumstance of the death of Christ, compel us indeed to see in the entire features and services of the completed Passover the type of our *One* sacrifice and our second sacrament! The peace offering, the thank offering, the solemn dedication of ourselves, as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," the unbroken "unity of *the body*" (Exod. xii. 46; John xix. 36), the "keeping of the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," and all the sacred, unbounded eucharistic enjoyments of that feast,—in a word, the need of deliverance, the Deliverer, and our joyful acknowledgment of the same, are all outlined for us in the Hebrew's Passover, and according to the measure of his faith and illumination were once all outlined for him, even in Hezekiah's time and celebration.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 10, 11.—*Letters to Ephraim: generosity.* Hezekiah now took a very bold and decided course. There had been no direct dealings between the king or court of Judah and the people of Ephraim (Israel) since the kingdom of David was rent in twain. If we understand that this action was taken in the first year of his reign, while Hoshea was on the throne of Samaria, it certainly was bold even to audacity, and was calculated to rouse the resentment of that ruler. If, however, we hold (with Keil and others) that it was not until the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign, when Shalmaneser had wrought his will with the sister kingdom, that the great Passover was held, the measure taken by the pious king is still one of considerable vigour and of no little generosity. We learn therefrom—

I. THAT A RIGHT COURSE WILL PROVE ONE OF SPIRITUAL ENLARGEMENT. Had not Hezekiah been a faithful servant of Jehovah, he would not have concerned himself about the moral and spiritual condition of Ephraim and Manasseh. He might have rejoiced in anything that would degrade and therefore enfeeble them. But as the servant of God, and therefore of the truth and of righteousness, he looked with sorrow upon the separation of those tribes of Israel from the God of their fathers, and it was "in his heart" (ch. xxix. 10) to take a step that might restore them to the faith they had abandoned and to the favour they had lost. His "heart was enlarged toward them" (2 Cor. vi. 11). There was nothing that was singular, but everything that was natural and usual in this. Let a man determine to take the right course, to set his whole life as well as rule his whole nature by principles which he believes to be Divine, and for him there will be a very blessed spiritual enlargement. He will come to see truths which had been quite out of sight, and to cherish feelings to which he had been a stranger, and to proceed upon lines high and far above the old levels. His life will be lifted up, himself will be enlarged and enriched abundantly.

II. THAT ADVANCES TOWARDS ESTRANGED RELATIVES ARE PECULIARLY HONOURABLE. It probably cost Hezekiah and his counsellors some considerable effort to make overtures to Israel. These tribes had revolted from the kingdom; they had lately inflicted a most severe and humiliating defeat upon Judah (ch. xxviii. 6—8). It may be taken that there existed a strong, if not an intense, animosity between those so nearly related to and yet so distinctly divided from one another (see John iv. 9; Luke ix. 52, 53). Nevertheless, they were regarded and treated as brethren. It is here where we so often fail in the illustration of Christian principles. We can show magnanimity toward those who are afar off, who belong to a different nation, or to another Church, or to a separate family; but we find it hard, perhaps impossible, to make advances toward those of our own people, of our own community, of our own family, between whom and ourselves some estrangement has come. Truly said the wise man, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city." And wisely says our English poet that

"... to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.

. . . . .

"They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder.
(Coleridge.)

But there is one thing that can bring together the divided hearts and lives of brethren—the generous heart which takes its rule of life and which gains "the spirit of its mind" from Jesus Christ.

III. THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE DETERRED FROM THE NOBLER COURSE BY THE POSSIBILITY OR EVEN THE LIKELIHOOD OF REPULSE. Hezekiah and his council faced this probability, and they ventured, notwithstanding. Their messengers did meet with much scornful rejection (ver. 10); but on this they must have counted, and by it they were not moved. In spite of all the mockery they encountered, they went through the land as they proposed. If we are careful to count all the possible consequences to ourselves, we shall never do noble deeds. The soldier does not weigh the chances of his being wounded as he goes into the battle; he does not mind if he goes home with some scars upon his countenance. Nor will the good soldier of Jesus Christ.

IV. THAT WE SHALL NOT GO UNREWARDED IF WE TAKE THIS GENEROUS COURSE. "Nevertheless divers . . . humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem" (ver. 11). The mission was not altogether a failure, even judged by its visible and calculable results. Any serious and generous attempt to heal old wounds and restore broken friendships, or to bring back to God those estranged from him, will not be unrewarded. 1. If it does not succeed wholly, it will in part. If it does not win affection and reopen fellowship, it may weaken resentment and make return easier another time. It may avail with one or two, if not with all. It may succeed in time, if not at once. 2. It will certainly result in some spiritual advancement on our own part. No true act of Christian love is ever lost to the agent himself. 3. It will win the smile and benediction of the magnanimous Saviour.—C.

Vers. 6—9.—*Four reasons for repentance.* The letters which Hezekiah sent throughout the cities and villages of Israel contained an earnest exhortation to repentance; they urged upon the inhabitants of that distressed land that, for the strongest reasons, they should return from their idolatrous ways, and worship the true and living God in his own temple. These considerations are fourfold.

I. IT IS TO THE GOD OF THEIR FATHERS THEY WERE EXHORTED TO RETURN. "Children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God . . . of Israel" (ver. 6). It was not to the house of a strange deity they were now invited; it was to the God of Israel—to him to whom their own ancestors bowed the knee; it was to him who ever called himself by the very name they bore, in whom their illustrious father put his trust and found his heritage. Whom should they serve but that One whom Israel himself acknowledged as the Lord his God (Gen. xxviii. 16—22)? To those who have gone astray to vanities, to the pursuits of earth, to human attachments, to perishable treasures, and who have forsaken the Divine Source of all good and joy, we have to say, "Return unto the Lord God of your fathers. He to whom and to whose service we invite your return is no strange God in your house. It is he whom your father, whom your mother, has loved and served these many years; whom (it may be) they are worshipping and serving now in the upper sanctuary. It is their tones that may be recognized in our voice, if you have an ear to hear, saying, 'Return unto our God, unto our Saviour, unto our heritage, unto our home.'"

II. REBELLION MEANS NOTHING BUT RUIN. "Who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation" (ver. 7). Assuming the (more probable) theory that the country was now in the hands of the Assyrians, there was "desolation" indeed; to most of their families (and to the best of them) captivity or bereavement; to the nation, as such, utter subjection, humiliation, ruin. This was the penalty of their rebellion against Jehovah, its natural and inevitable end (Deut. xxix. 22—28). To those who are estranged from God we have to say, "Return unto God, for distance from him is spiritual ruin." 1. It is the forfeiture of the true heritage of the human soul, the heritage it has in the favour and the friendship of God. 2. It is the endurance of his most serious displeasure. 3. It is a spiritual bondage, the bondage of sin. 4. It is the beginning of death eternal.

III. THERE IS NO DANGER OF REPULSE. "The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him" (ver. 9). The people of this idolatrous realm might well ask whether they had not hopelessly separated themselves from Jehovah, whether their rebelliousness had not gone such lengths that mercy was not to be looked for. But Hezekiah charged them to dismiss all such fears from their minds; their repentance would meet with a gracious response from the forgiving God of their fathers. It is one of the strongest inducements we have to offer to those now spiritually estranged, that their genuine repentance, the turning of their heart toward the God of their fathers, and their seeking his mercy in Jesus Christ the Divine Saviour, is *certain* to be attended with his abundant mercy, and to be followed by their restitution to the favour they have lost, to the home they have left, to the blessedness they have thrown away. There is absolutely *no* fear of a repulse—*that* is a moral impossibility; the unchangeable Word of the faithful God is the immovable pledge that return means reconciliation.

IV. RECONCILIATION FOR THEMSELVES MEANS MERCY FOR THEIR RELATIONS. "Your brethren and your children shall find compassion," etc. (ver. 9). This was *their* one and only hope. If God had mercy upon Israel that was in Israel, he might, he would, recall their brethren and children from the land of their captivity; otherwise these must perish in "a strange land," in the land of the enemy. Our message to men is not unlike this; we have to say to them, "If you will consult the well-being of those in whom you are most interested and for whom you are most responsible; if you will care for the salvation of those nearest and dearest to you, of your brethren and your children; then do you live the life of the holy, do you give the best and strongest evidence that you believe in the excellency of the service of Christ, do you turn from the transient and the unsatisfying treasures of earth, and seek your heritage in the favour of the heavenly Father, in the love and the friendship of the Saviour of mankind. Therefore 'yield yourselves unto God' (ver. 8); enter his sanctuary; accept the overtures of his Son; sit down at his table; take on you his Name and his vows."—C.

Vers. 17—20.—*The one essential thing.* A very interesting and instructive incident occurred in the celebration of this great Passover. Many who presented themselves and brought their lamb had not gone through the prescribed purifications before engaging in an act of sacrifice, and they were disqualified to slay the lamb. So the Levites, under the peculiar circumstances, took this part for them. It was a formal irregularity; it was not according to the letter of the Law; there had been a breach of the enactment. But Hezekiah prayed God on behalf of those who had transgressed, and his prayer was heard, and the Lord "healed the people" who had so done. There is one lesson which stands out from the others; but before we learn that, we may gather on our way the truths—

I. THAT SUBSTITUTION AND INTERCESSION HAVE THEIR PLACE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The Levites were permitted to take the parents' place on this occasion, and Hezekiah's prayer for the pardon of the irregularity was granted. We may do some things for our fellow-men, and we do well to pray God for their enlightenment and restoration. But it is not far that either of these two principles can be permitted. "Every man must bear his own burden" of responsibility before God; must repent of his own sin; must approach his Maker in the spirit of self-surrender; must enter by himself the kingdom of Christ. The work we can do for others, though not without its value, is narrow in its range. To every human soul it belongs to realize his position, to hearken when Heaven is speaking, to make his final and decisive choice, to take his place among the friends or among the foes of Jesus Christ. We may not build on a brother's help, nor presume even on a mother's prayers.

II. THAT PRIVATION OF PRIVILEGE IS TAKEN INTO THE DIVINE CONSIDERATION. The principal if not the only defaulters here were the men of "Ephraim and Manasseh," etc. (ver. 18); *i.e.* those who had been living in the idolatrous kingdom of Israel, those who had been far from the temple of Jerusalem, and had lived with little (if any) instruction in the Divine Law. Much leniency might justly be accorded to these; and much allowance *was* made for them. God requireth of us "not according to that we have not, but according to that we have." From those to whom but little privilege and opportunity are given, the slighter service will be demanded. Our God is just, considerate, gracious.

III. THAT SIN IS A VERY DISABLING THING. "The Lord healed the people." By their offence against the Law they had lost their wholeness, their health, and needed to "be healed." Sin is a moral sickness; it is the disorder of the spirit; it is that which weakens, which disables, which makes the sinner unable to be and to do what he was created to be and to do. But the main lesson is this—

IV. THAT THE ESSENTIAL THING IS SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY. These transgressors were forgiven *partly* in virtue of Hezekiah's prayer. But may we not say *principally* because the righteous Lord discerned in them *the spirit of obedience?* They had come up to Jerusalem that they might return upon Jehovah their God. It was in their heart to cast off their old and evil practices, and to begin a new life of uprightness before God: was their ceremonial irregularity to outweigh, in the estimate of the Just One, the integrity of their heart before him? The purpose of their soul was toward God and toward his service: was not that to be accepted, in spite of a legal impropriety or negligence? Certainly it was; and these men went down to their homes in Israel justified before the Lord. It is the spirit of obedience which our God demands of us, for which he looks in us. If that be absent, nothing else of any kind or magnitude will suffice. If that be present, we may be defaulters in many small particulars, but neither we nor our offering will be refused. To have a pure, deep, fixed desire to seek and to serve the Lord Christ—that is the one essential thing.—C.

Vers. 21—27.—*Religious enthusiasm.* This chapter reads as if written by an eye-witness of the scenes described, so vivid is the account, so much colour is in the picture. It was evidently a time of very great enthusiasm, of spiritual exuberance. These are very pleasant, and they *may be* very profitable occasions; but they need to be rightly directed and well controlled. Of religious enthusiasm, we may consider—

I. ITS ONLY FIRM FOUNDATION. This is a true sense of the Divine favour. Unless God be with us, granting us his own approval, intending to further us with his blessing, all our congratulations are ill-timed and all our action will be fruitless. And it is needful that we *know* that we have his approval. It is too often assumed in its absence. Hezekiah and his people, with Isaiah among them, were resting in a well-grounded confidence. Without such prophetic guidance, we must inquire of ourselves whether our repentance and our faith are deep and real; whether we have in truth "yielded ourselves unto the Lord" (ver. 8), whether we are "Christ's disciples indeed" (John viii. 31).

II. ITS NATURAL ATMOSPHERE. Sacred joy. They "kept the feast . . . with great gladness" (ver. 21); "There was great joy in Jerusalem" (ver. 26). There are many sources of happiness, reaching upwards from the most gross to the most spiritual and refined. There is none deeper or purer, none more elevated or enlarging, than the joy of the human spirit in the worship and service of the Supreme. To be holding hallowed fellowship with our Divine Father and Saviour, and to be so doing in unison with a multitude of our Christian brethren and sisters, or to be engaged with them in doing some earnest and faithful work,—this is a source of truest and worthiest human joy.

III. ITS BEST MANIFESTATIONS. 1. In *sacred song.* The Levites "praised the Lord day by day" (ver. 21). A large measure of spiritual fervour finds utterance in song, happily to ourselves and acceptably to God. There is no phase of sacred feeling which may not find fitting expression thus. 2. In wise and kind *encouragement* Hezekiah "spake comfortably unto all the Levites" (ver. 22). He no doubt congratulated them on their good spiritual estate and on their opportunity of service, and invited and urged them to exercise their sacred functions in all fidelity. A few words of timely encouragement from one that is in a higher position go a long way; such words constitute a stronger inducement to duty and devotion than many words of criticism or censure. 3. In *religious instruction.* "That taught the good knowledge of the Lord" (ver. 22). 4. In *re-dedication.* "A great number of priests sanctified themselves." Some of the priests, probably many, if not most of them, had shown slackness and had held back (ch. xxix. 34); they had some reason for being ashamed (see ver. 15). But in this hour of widespread enthusiasm they came forward and made themselves ready for their sacred functions. At such a time, much is gained if those who have become cool in the service of their Lord, whose faith is failing and whose zeal is dying down, re-consecrate themselves to him, take afresh upon them his vows, and solemnly and formally undertake to live and labour in his cause. 5. In *expansiveness.* Room was found for "the strangers that came out of the land of Israel"—room in the hearts and at the tables of the people. Nothing can be better than that our own great gladness of heart in God should overflow to those beyond our own pale. By all means let there be a generous expansiveness at such a time; let the stranger, let the "outsider," let the outcast, let the "abandoned," let those who have come to despair of themselves, be remembered, be sought out, be encouraged, be enlightened, be admitted and welcomed. We tread closely in the steps of our Leader when we act thus. 6. In *liberality.* In the generous use of our substance (see ver. 24). When we are receiving freely of God's good gift of sacred joy, we should give freely of the good he has entrusted to our care.—C.

Vers. 1—12.—*Preparations for a grand national Passover.* I. A PASSOVER DECIDED ON. (Vers. 1, 5.) 1. *By whom?* Hezekiah, his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, with both of whom he had taken counsel. The important step, not adopted without deliberation, was concurred in by the entire body of the people (ver. 4). If any in the nation held aloof, these were the priests and the Levites (ver. 15). 2. *For whom?* All Israel and Judah. The contemplated Passover should not be sectional or provincial, but national. For "all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan"—for the inhabitants of the two kingdoms, which ought never to have been divided, and in religion at least should ever have been one. 3. *On what ground?* (1) That it was their duty to keep such a Passover. It was written in the Law of Moses that all the congregation of Israel should eat the Passover (Exod. xii. 47); that three times a year should all the males of the nation keep a feast unto the Lord, one of these feasts being that of Unleavened Bread, or the Passover (Exod. xxiii. 14, 15); and that the Passover should be "sacrificed in the place which Jehovah should choose to set his Name there" (Deut. xvi. 2). (2) That such a Passover had not been observed by them either in great numbers (Revised Version), *en masse*, by the whole body of the people (Bertheau, Keil), or for a long time (Authorized Version, De Wette). Certainly since the division of the kingdom they had not observed the Passover; and even prior to that it is doubtful if the feast had been observed by such numbers as to amount to a national celebration. The unsettled state of the country during the period of the judges was not favourable to the carrying out of the Deuteronomic programme; and the same might be said (though perhaps in a less degree) of the early years of the monarchy; so that probably for a Paschal celebration on a truly national scale the historian must go back to the days of Joshua immediately after entering Canaan, and before the dispersion of the people had commenced (Josh. v. 10, 11).

II. THE TIME OF CELEBRATION FIXED. (Ver. 2.) 1. *In the second month.* (1) This not the regular or legal month, which was the first, or Abib (Exod. xii. 18; Lev. xxiii. 5, 8), the month in which Jehovah brought his people out of Egypt (Deut. xvi. 1, 2). (2) This, however, allowable in special circumstances, as *e.g.* when through absence on a journey or ceremonial uncleanness it could not be kept on the statutory day (Numb. ix. 6—12). In the present instance the special circumstances were that when the decision to hold a Passover was arrived at, the 14th of Abib was too near to admit of either the priests getting themselves sanctified in sufficient numbers to do the necessary work, or the population of the country gathering at Jerusalem in time to give to the feast the character of a national celebration. 2. *In the first or sixth (perhaps seventh) year of Hezekiah's reign.* (1) In favour of the former view (Bertheau, Jamieson), it may be urged that it is the most natural; that Hezekiah would more likely take advantage of the widespread religious enthusiasm evoked by the purification and re-dedication of the temple to appoint a Passover than delay for five if not six years; and that the difficulty of understanding how he got permission to send heralds through the northern kingdom may be overcome by remembering that Hoshea, the last King of Israel, was not so bad as his predecessors on the throne had been (2 Kings xvii. 2), and that Hezekiah may have obtained his consent to the proposal of a grand Passover for all Israel and Judah (Bertheau). An obvious objection to this is that Hezekiah's letters represented the inhabitants of Israel as "the remnant escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria" (ver. 6), and that the siege of Samaria did not commence till Hezekiah's fourth year (2 Kings xviii. 9), while the only deportation of people from the northern kingdom before that was the removal of the trans-Jordanic tribes and Naphtalites by Tiglath-Pileser II. (2 Kings xv. 29)—which would hardly have justified the strong language of Hezekiah with reference to Israel's depleted condition. Another difficulty is that, as during the first years of Hezekiah's reign Hoshea was becoming restive under the heavy tribute of ten talents of gold and a thousand of silver imposed on him by Tiglath-Pileser II. ('Records,' etc., v. 52; Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' 256), and was even negotiating with So (Sabako), King of Egypt, about throwing off the Assyrian yoke (2 Kings xvii. 4), it is hardly to be supposed he would readily consent to the absence of all his male subjects at Jerusalem even for a limited time. Besides, it is doubtful if a month was not too short a space to admit of the king's runners travelling from Dan to Beersheba, and of the people assembling from all corners of the land at Jerusalem. (2) In favour of the second view (Keil, Caspari), that the Passover was held after the capture of Samaria, in B.C. 720, and the deportation of its inhabitants—according to an inscription of Sargon, 27,280 (Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' 272; 'Records,' etc., vii. 28)—it may be pointed out that after that event the situation in Israel corresponded more exactly with the language of Hezekiah (ver. 6), and that, Israel having no more an independent sovereign, Hezekiah may have deemed the moment opportune for attempting a reunion of the nations.

III. THE INVITATIONS ISSUED. (Vers. 6—10.) 1. *In whose name they were given.* In that of Hezekiah and his princes. The absence of any reference to Hoshea points to a time subsequent to the captivity of Israel. 2. *By whom they were carried.* The posts, or runners, *i.e.* king's messengers (Esth. iii. 13, 15; viii. 14), who may have been members of the royal body-guard (ch. xii. 10). 3. *To what purport they ran.* (1) A threefold exhortation. (*a*) To turn again to Jehovah, renouncing idolatry and embracing the religion prescribed by Moses (ver. 6). (*b*) Not to imitate the stubborn conduct of their fathers, who had been carried away captive (vers. 7, 8). (*c*) To resume attendance at the sanctuary, which Jehovah had sanctified for ever as the central place of his worship (ver. 8). (2) A fourfold argument. (*a*) Duty. Jehovah was the Lord God of their fathers, even of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, as the one living and true, gracious, and covenant-keeping God, was entitled to their allegiance (vers. 6, 7). (*b*) Fear. If they continued rebellious, Jehovah's anger would fall on and consume them who were but a remnant, as already it had fallen on and consumed their fathers. (*c*) Clemency. If they returned to Jehovah, Jehovah would turn away the fierceness of his anger from them, and extend mercy to those who had been carried away captive, causing them to find favour in the eyes of their captors and even to return to their own land (ver. 9). (*d*) Hope. The certainty that they would thus be treated was guaranteed by the fact that Jehovah, whom they had forsaken, and to whom they were now invited to return, was a gracious and merciful God (ver. 9). Or otherwise, Hezekiah pleaded with them to return on the grounds of national unity—Jehovah was Israel's God as well as Judah's; of historic continuity—Jehovah had been the Lord God of their fathers; of self-interest—it was the only way to avert their total extinction; of brotherly compassion—it was the most effectual means of helping their exiled brethren.

IV. THE RECEPTION ACCORDED TO THE MESSENGERS. (Vers. 10—12.) 1. *In Israel.* (1) From the main body of the population, laughter and scorn. Seemingly they ridiculed the idea of having to protect themselves from extermination by finding a sovereign in Hezekiah and a God in Jehovah. Tiglath-Pileser II., if the earlier date be adopted, had only overrun and laid waste a portion of their country, the trans-Jordanic tribes, with the land of Naphtali, and from these had carried away not all the population, but only the principal inhabitants; while, if the latter date be accepted as the more probable, Sargon in addition had removed only 27,280 persons ('Records,' vii. 28). Hence as yet they perceived not the necessity of either abandoning hope for the kingdom or of repairing to Jerusalem to find a king and a God. So the ambassadors of a greater King than Hezekiah, wandering from city to city throughout the world and carrying to their fellows a better invitation than Hezekiah's runners did to Israel, are frequently met with derision for themselves and their glad tidings; as *e.g.* Paul at Athens (Acts xvii. 32), as Christ himself, God's chief Ambassador and Plenipotentiary in the city of Jerusalem (John i. 11). (2) From individuals, especially in Asher, Manasseh, Zabulon (ver. 11), and Issachar (ver. 8), the northern tribes contiguous to Naphtali, cordial acceptance. These, being country-people, were meek ones, not ashamed to humble themselves on account of their own and their nation's wickedness, and to embrace the opportunity of becoming reconciled to Jehovah and their brethren in Judah. Accordingly they spurned not the invitation addressed to them, but "came to Jerusalem." In like manner is the King's letter in the gospel oftener welcomed and accepted by unlearned rustics than by gay and wise residents in cities; and always by the poor in spirit, who, conscious of their sin and misery, long to be reconciled to God (Matt. v. 3—6). 2. *In Judah.* The people generally responded to their sovereign's invitation. (1) With unanimity. They were of one mind to do the commandment of the king and the princes. A united heart an invaluable preparation for obedience, whether for individual or for state (Jer. xxxii. 39; Ezek. xi. 19, 20). (2) In a spirit of obedience. They recognized the king's and princes' commandment to be in accordance with the word of Jehovah (cf. ch. xxix. 15). The Word of God, in the Old and New Testaments, the supreme directory for faith and practice. "To the Law and to the testimony" (Isa. viii. 20). The Bereans searched the Scriptures (Acts xvii. 11). (3) In compliance with a heavenly impulse. That they were thus enlightened and unanimous was owing to Divine grace; "The hand of God was upon them" for good, as it always is upon them that seek him (Ezra viii. 22).

Learn: 1. The unspeakable blessing to a land of a pious king and court. 2. The certainty that God will aid all who seek to extend his cause and kingdom. 3. The necessity of diligence, fidelity, sympathy, and courage on the part of all "runners" to the King of heaven. 4. The hopefulness with which divinely commissioned preachers may enter on their mission—there will always be found a remnant to hear and obey. 5. The excellence of a humble spirit in disposing one to listen to the gospel.—W.

Vers. 13—27.—*A national Passover at Jerusalem.* I. THE CELEBRATING CONGREGATION. 1. *Large.* "Much people;" "a very great congregation" (ver. 13). Though this was usual at the chief religious festivals of the nation, probably so vast a concourse of people as assembled at Jerusalem in answer to the king's invitation, in the second month of the first or seventh year of his reign (see preceding homily), had not been witnessed since the days of Jehoiada (ch. xxiii. 2) or of Asa (ch. xv. 9, 10). Something stimulating and impressive in the sight of a crowded city, even when its seething population drifts aimlessly about, much more when all are swayed by a common feeling and moved by a common impulse. 2. *Mixed.* Composed of (1) all the congregation of Judah, *i.e.* of the inhabitants of the metropolis and of the country districts of Judæa, with the priests and the Levites; (2) all the congregation that came out of Israel, viz. a multitude of people from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zabulon (ver. 18); and (3) the strangers, or proselytes who dwelt within the borders of Judah, and those who came from Israel or the northern kingdom (ver. 25). 3. *United.* All actuated by one purpose—that of keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread (ver. 13), which probably none of them in their lifetime had ever done. It was such a festival as could be rightly celebrated only by a united people, and such as was fitted to draw closer the bonds of union between the celebrants. 4. *Resolute.* Prepared to undergo any sacrifices and attempt any labours necessary to carry the feast through with success, determined to be hindered by nothing and no one from their great act of religious homage to the Lord God of their fathers (vers. 19, 22). 5. *Joyous.* Inspired with feelings of gladness (ver. 23), even "great gladness" (ver. 21), and "great joy" (ver. 26), which found expression in peace offerings and penitential confessions (ver. 22), accompanied by vocal and instrumental strains, and abated not during the seven days of the feast proper (ver. 21), but sustained the people throughout seven superadded days (ver. 23). Indeed, so high ran the enthusiasm, and so overflowing became the joy, that nothing like it had been witnessed since the days of Solomon, when the dedication of the temple had been celebrated by a double period of rejoicing (ch. vii. 1—10). The occasion certainly was fitted to excite gladness—the return of the nation to its allegiance to Jehovah. So is the soul's return to God in penitence, faith, and holy obedience a cause of jubilation not only in heaven (Luke xv. 7, 10), but also on earth (Acts viii. 8); and not among spectators merely, but also in the souls of them who return (Luke xxiv. 52; Acts viii. 39; Rom. v. 11). Moreover, the service of God and Christ should always be accompanied with gladness (Ps. c. 2; cxlix. 2, 5; Isa. xii. 3), as in gladness it will invariably result (Ps. lxiv. 10; Isa. xlviii. 18; li. 11; Rom. xiv. 17; 1 Thess. v. 16).

II. THE CELEBRATED FESTIVAL. 1. *The zeal of the people.* (1) Necessary preparation. This consisted of two things—the purgation of the city from idolatry, and the cleansing of themselves from defilement. The first they carried out with promptitude and decision—"they arose and took away the altars" (ver. 14); and with thoroughgoing energy and efficiency which allowed of no escape—"they took them all away," the altars for offering to heathen divinities, and the altars or "vessels" for incense, which Ahaz had erected in every corner of the city (ch. xxviii. 24), and cast them into the Kidron, where already the filth of the temple had been thrown (ch. xxix. 16). Never in any previous reign had there been such a clearance of the instruments of idolatry as now occurred under Hezekiah. The second, though not mentioned, is implied, at least, of those who belonged to Judah (see ver. 17; and cf. on ver. 3). These, having had the means of self-sanctification at hand, most likely used them; those who came from Israel having not had such means, their want of sanctification was prayed for and overlooked (vers. 17—20). (2) Statutory adoration. They killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month (see on ver. 2). The heads of families in Judah who were sanctified killed their own lambs and placed the blood in the priests' hands; for such as had not been cleansed according to the purification of the sactuary, the Levites killed the Passovers, and delivered the blood into the hands of the priests (ver. 17). These sprinkled the blood upon the altars. 2. *The behaviour of the priests and Levites.* (1) Their sanctification of themselves. The priests and Levites were not those of Jerusalem merely who had taken part in the dedication of the temple and of whom it is said (ch. xxix. 34) that the Levites had been more forward to sanctify themselves than the priests, but the whole body of the priests and Levites who had come from

Judah and Israel, among whom were many who did not immediately purify themselves from defilement as they ought to have done on convening at Jerusalem. Most likely at first half-hearted in the business, afterwards through beholding the zeal of the people they were shamed into repairing their neglect. (2) Their discharge of official duties. Having sanctified themselves, they performed the statutory functions required of them in connection with their consecration: "They brought burnt offerings into the house of the Lord" (cf. Lev. viii. 18; Numb. viii. 12); or with the Passover: "They brought the [Authorized Version] burnt offerings" presented by the people "into the house of the Lord," and "they stood in their places after their order according to the Law of Moses," the priests sprinkling the blood upon the altar (Lev. xvi. 14—19), and the Levites, for the reason above explained, handing the blood to them. 3. *The piety of the king.* (1) The king's prayer (vers. 18—20). (*a*) To whom addressed. "The good Lord." Goodness an attribute of the Divine nature (Ps. xxv. 8; xxxiv. 8; Nah. i. 7), in its ideal character belonging only to him (Matt. xix. 17), infinite in its measure (Exod. xxxiv. 6) and excellence (Ps. xxxvi. 7), unwearied in its operation (Ps. xxxiii. 5; Jas. i. 5), ever-during in its continuance (Ps. lii. 1). (*b*) For whom presented? "Every one that prepareth [Authorized Version, or 'setteth' Revised Version] his heart to seek the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary;" *i.e.* for every one who approached God with earnestness and resolution, "preparing and setting his heart"—in the margin, "his whole heart" (ch. xv. 12; Ps. cxix. 2); with humility and faith, seeking "the Lord God of his fathers," thereby acknowledging he believed in Jehovah as his rightful Lord, and had sinned in turning aside to idolatry (Judg. x. 10; 1 Sam. xii. 10; ch. vi. 37; Ps. cvi. 6; Jer. xiv. 7); with obedience and submission, embracing the right way of seeking God, in Jerusalem (Deut. xii. 5), at his temple (Exod. xxv. 8), through the sacrificial worship by him appointed (Heb. ix. 13)—as under the New Testament dispensation no one can approach God acceptably except through Christ (John xiv. 6), though with imperfection and defect in external ceremonial—which showed that the best spirits in the Hebrew Church had some conception of the spirituality of all true worship of God, of the value of real heart-adoration even when accompanied by errors in form, and of the worthlessness of the most externally correct, complete, æsthetically beautiful, and perfect performance when divorced from the inner homage of the heart. (*c*) What it sought. The pardon of every one who had approached the Divine altar without complying with the Divine prescription as to self-purification. A sin of ignorance in case of some, in that of others a sin of involuntary disability, it was nevertheless a violation of the divinely appointed order, as real though not as heinous as that of Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 18), and as such fitted to evoke a display of Divine anger similar to that which fell on Uzziah. (*d*) How it fared. "The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people" (ver. 20); which may signify either that symptoms of bodily malady had begun to appear among the people, or that Hezekiah feared they would. In either case Hezekiah's prayer was successful for his people, as afterwards was his supplication for himself (ch. xxxii. 24). Cf. the intercession of Abraham for the cities of the plain (Gen. xviii. 23—32), of Moses for Israel (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32), of David for his people (2 Sam. xxiv. 17), of Daniel for Jerusalem (ix. 17—19), of Paul for his converts (Eph. iii. 14—19; Phil. i. 3—9). (2) The king's exhortation (ver. 22). (*a*) The recipients of it. "All the Levites that taught the good *knowledge* of the Lord" (Authorized Version), *i.e.* who were more skilled and able to instruct others in the proper method of worshipping Jehovah (Piscator); or, more accurately, "all the Levites that were well skilled *in the service* of Jehovah" (Revised Version), or as regards Jehovah; *i.e.* "who had distinguished themselves by intelligent playing to the honour of the Lord" (Keil). (*b*) The spirit of it. He spake comfortably, or to the heart, of all. No doubt there were degrees of excellence amongst the players and their music, but the king made no distinction in his treatment of them; he spake to the hearts of all. His words of encouragement and good cheer were needed by all, perhaps most by those least skilled who yet were doing their best. Leaders of men, pastors of Churches, and such-like, sometimes forget this, and, by making distinctions between the more gifted and the less, do injury to both—inflate the former with pride, and cast down the latter with discouragement. (3) The king's liberality (ver. 24). This was: (*a*) Munificent. Hezekiah presented to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep. (*b*) Catching. "The princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep." (*c*) Timely. It enabled the people to carry out their good resolution to prolong the feast for seven more days. (*d*) Appreciated. It filled the people's hearts with gladness, and doubtless contributed largely to entwine their affections round the person and the throne of the king.

Learn: 1. The duty of not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together for Divine worship (Heb. x. 25). 2. The excellence of unity among the people of God (Ps. cxxxiii. 1; Acts iv. 32; 1 Cor. i. 10). 3. The joyous character of all true worship (1 Chron. xvi. 27; Ps. xxxii. 11; c. 1, 2; Luke xxiv. 52; Eph. v. 18, 19). 4. The acceptableness of sincere worship even when mingled with imperfection (Acts x. 35). 5. The beauty as well as propriety of Christian liberality (Exod. xxiii. 15; 2 Cor. viii. 9).—W.

Ver. 26.—*An ideal city: Jerusalem in the first days of Hezekiah.* I. ITS GOD WAS GRACIOUS. (Ver. 9.) Its people had a Divinity who was: 1. *Propitious towards their persons.* He had given them one heart (ver. 12). 2. *Propitious towards their sacrifices.* He accepted them, although offered not in perfect accordance with the Law of Moses (ver. 16). 3. *Propitious towards their prayers.* He heard the king's intercession (ver. 20), the priests' prayers (ver. 27), and the people's confessions (ver. 22).

II. ITS KING WAS RELIGIOUS. (Ch. xxix. 2.) This was manifested by: 1. *His care for the institutions of religion.* Exemplified in his purification and dedication of the temple, including his rearrangement of the Levitical orders of musicians. 2. *His zeal in the observances of religion.* Shown by his revival of the Passover ordinance, and the efforts made by him to secure a national observance of the same (ch. xxx. 1). 3. *His possession of the spirit of religion.* Besides being a man of prayer (ver. 18), he delighted to encourage others in good works (ver. 22), and evinced his own sincerity by the abundance of his liberality (ver. 24).

III. ITS MINISTERS WERE INDUSTRIOUS. (Ver. 17.) 1. *In attending to their own personal sanctification.* (Ver. 15.) This no ministers of religion under the New Testament dispensation can afford to neglect. He who cares nothing for the cultivation of piety in himself is not likely to be zealous in aiming at the good of others. 2. *In discharging the public services of the sanctuary.* Under the Hebrew economy these services were the offering of sacrifice and the blessing of the people (ver. 27) by the priests, with the making of music by the Levites; under the Christian economy they are chiefly the preaching of the gospel, the conducting of worship, and the superintendence of the Church. Where the ordinances of religion fall into abeyance and neglect, and the ministers of religion are as heedless of the souls of others as of their own, it is idle to expect prosperity, in either Church or state, in city or in country.

IV. ITS INHABITANTS WERE JOYOUS. (Ver. 26.) 1. *Exulting in Jehovah's favour.* Without a conviction that they possessed this, the mere external celebration would not have filled them with such long-continued, deep, and exuberant emotion (Ps. xxxiii. 21; Isa. xii. 2; Rom. v. 11). 2. *Observing the rites of religion.* In turning from the worship of idols to serve the living God, they experienced an inward satisfaction which made them "sing in the ways of the Lord" (Ps. cxxxviii. 5). 3. *Enjoying the affection of their brethren.* Of one heart and mind, there was not a jarring note in their melody. They dwelt together in peace, and loved as brethren, each esteeming the other as better than himself, and all preferring one another and honouring one another.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter, after its first verse (which holds an intermediate place with relation to the enthusiastic devoutness of the people recorded in the last verse of the former chapter, and what now followed of the doings of the king), tells how Hezekiah once more settles, first, the courses of the priests and Levites, and the offerings for their support (vers. 2—10); and, secondly, both the offices and officers needful for rightly attending to the business. The Book of Kings gives us no parallel to this chapter

Ver. 1.—As much as the last verse of the foregoing chapter was all of the religious fervour of the occasion, this verse is all of the practical honest work of the people and their leaders. **All Israel that were present**; *i.e.* present (or Hebrew, "found") in Jerusalem at the conclusion of the Feast of the Passover. Jerusalem had already been attended to (ver. 14 of foregoing chapter). Now the right mind of the people bore the reformation with a wave of enthusiasm over all Judah and Benjamin; and their righteous zeal carried them also over the strict limits of their own kingdom **into Ephraim . . . and Manasseh**—a course the more practicable, and even the more technically correct, because of the crippled state of the northern kingdom, and the probably still continued captivity of King Hoshea of Israel (2 Kings xvii. 1—4; xviii. 1—7; compare also the matter of our ch. xxix. 24). **Images . . . groves . . . high places . . . altars** (comp. ch. xiv. 3, etc.).

Ver. 2.—And Hezekiah appointed the courses. The twenty-fourth and following two chapters of 1 Chronicles give in full the appointment and arrangement of these courses, now again thrown out of order. *Appointed*; Hebrew, וַיַּעֲמֵד. It is equivalent to saying Hezekiah *re-established* the courses. **Of the tents.** The word is not "tents," but the expressive and emphatic "camps" (מַחֲנוֹת). Order of the divinest kind, discipline of the most perfect sort, are the glory of the temple and temple service of old, of the Church, her ministers, her members, and all her pious work of more modern date.

Ver. 3.—Also the king's portion of his substance; *i.e.* Hezekiah did not evade his own responsibilities in the matter of contribution. His "portion" was the tithe, and he was evidently liable on "substance very much" (ch. xxxii. 29). Numb. xxviii., xxix., and Lev. xxiii. give us the particulars of the offerings and set feasts, respectively here alluded to, in their original prescription.

Ver. 4.—He commanded . . . to give the portion of the priests . . . that they might be encouraged. Hezekiah's object was to send impulses of energy through the whole nation. The portions here spoken of are described originally in Exod. xxiii. 19; Numb. xviii. 11—27; Deut. xiv. 22, 23. After our word "encouraged," we may probably supply the words "to teach;" for see our ch. xvii. 9.

Ver. 5.—Honey; Hebrew, דְּבַשׁ. This is no doubt the proper word for the honey of bees, for see Judg. xiv. 8—18; 1 Sam. xiv. 27; Ps. xix. 11, and many other passages. It is not certain, however, that the word did not cover other sweet preparations, as probably in Gen. xliii. 11; Ezek. xxvii. 17. The alternative reading, "dates," has thus come into the margin, but on very insufficient title, as, while there is doubt as to whether the honey of bees was generally tithed, there is none at all that the people's pious zeal might prompt them to bring tithe of it *voluntarily*, among other things, that they at any time held in honour and had in abundance.

Ver. 6.—That dwelt in the cities of Judah. As vers. 4 and 5 referred to the dwellers in Jerusalem, so this verse tells of the dwellers in other cities, villages, etc., of the surrounding country (so ch. xxx. 25). **Their tithes of holy things** probably denote the "heave offerings" of Aaron (Numb. xviii. 8; for other references to the matter of this verse, see Lev. xxvii. 30; Deut. xiv. 28).

Ver. 7.—The third month . . . the heaps . . . the seventh month. The grain harvest closed with the Feast of Weeks, about the sixth day of the third month so that tithe in kind would be paid. The seventh month brought the Feast of Ingathering, when the vintage was over. For illustration of the despatch with which Hezekiah proceeded in his reforming works, comp. our ch. xxix. 3; xxx. 2, 13.

Ver. 9.—The questioning had no doubt to do with the subject how the superabundant contributions should be utilized or preserved.

Ver. 10.—Azariah . . . chief priest of the house of Zadok. Though this *Azariah* be of the house of Zadok, he is not of the line of Jozadak; and we cannot be certain that he is one with him of ch. xxvi. 17, 20; in which case his grandson Jotham (ch. xxvii. 1) would be grandfather of Hezekiah, inferring a long term both for his office and his life.

Ver. 11.—To prepare chambers; *i.e.* to prepare for present use *the* chambers constructed for the purpose (1 Kings vi. 5).

Ver. 12.—Faithfully. A pleasant reminiscence of ch. xix. 9. **Shimei** (see ch. xxix. 14). **Ruler . . . the next** (so note, 1 Chron. v. 12).

Ver. 13.—Of these ten subordinates, **Jehiel and Nahath** are found in ch. xxix. 12, 14.

Ver. 14.—Kore. The name one with the grandson of Korah (1 Chron. ix. 19; xxvi 17).

Ver. 15.—Eden . . . Shemaiah (see ch. xxix. 12, 14). **In the cities** (see Josh. xxi. 19). **In their set office**; *i.e.* in their appointed duty. The word (בֶּאֱמוּנָה) here used bespeaks the important and trustworthy nature of the duty committed to those spoken of, and probably betrays the fact that the duty had not always in the past been *honestly* discharged (see same word in ver. 12).

Ver. 16.—Beside their genealogy of males; *i.e.* except (מִלְּבַד) the family count of males, etc., the remainder of the verse describing those who are meant by the *excepted*. They were excepted because for themselves and their little ones, their daily present temple service brought their daily maintenance as of course. The "*unto* every one" of our version is misleading. Keil translates perspicuously, "of all those who entered the house of the Lord, to the daily portion for their service," etc. The glimpse of the picture of the little children fed for the sake of their fathers' sanctuary service, so true to the true religion even of nature, is a pleasant glimpse to catch.

Ver. 17.—It is hard to feel certain as to the exact construction of this and the following verse. Keil would translate here, "And concerning the catalogue of the priests, *it was* according, etc.; and the Levites, *they were* from twenty years," etc. And arrived at ver. 18, and unable to proceed in like manner with it, he reverts to the "to give" of ver. 15, as what is to stand before the words, "*to the genealogy* [or, 'catalogue'] of all their little ones." He thus treats both vers. 16 and 17 as parenthetical. It seems quite as probable that the "to give" should be shown before ver. 17 as well as ver. 18. On the whole, this seems to suit best the entire passage. The significant וְאֵת, at the beginning of ver. 17, neutralizes then the מִלְּבַד of ver. 16, and connects vers. 15 and 17. (On the words, from twenty years old, comp. 1 Chron. xxiii. 27. See also Numb. iv. 3; viii. 24.)

Ver. 18.—(Comp. our ch. xx. 13.)

Ver. 19.—The much more manifest meaning of this verse confirms the interpretation favoured just above for vers. 15, 17, 18. The men that were expressed by name; translate, *men were expressed . . . to give.* The purport of this verse is to say that *all* priests and Levites of full age were sacredly remembered and similarly carefully provided for, viz. those also who lived in the fields of the suburbs of the cities (Lev. xxv. 32—34; Numb. xxxv. 2—5).

Ver. 20.—This verse, when rendered with literal exactness, is a fine instance of the force and brevity of the Hebrew style in Old Testament history: And thus did Hezekiah in all Judah, and he did the good and the right and the truth in the sight of Jehovah his God.

Ver. 21.—In every work; translate, *and in all work.* The "all work" being in the following clause triply described as pertaining to the service of the house of God, the observance of the sacred Law, and of any individual commandments flowing from it.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—21.—*The works that came of faith.* This chapter discloses to our view the perfection of activity. The rest of the Sunday, so to say, is followed by most laudable industry, and "the fervent in spirit" are "diligent in business" worthy of them. The picture is, indeed, of a living, moving scene. An army of volunteers issues forth from the recently purged city of Jerusalem to engage in worthy warfare, extirpating "images," "groves," "high places," "altars," and utterly exterminating them from "Judah and Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh." They do not stay their hand till the work is done. The "camp" (ver. 2) also at home, the sacred camp of the temple, is once more set in array, that shall make it answer to its name, and in higher sense show forth that Church, wherein all should be "decent and in order." King and people, priests, chief priest, and Levites, work with one surprising consent. The destruction of images and all the other signs of idolatry is followed by the restoration of David's arrangement of the courses, dishonoured so grievously by the neglect of worship in the temple, even to the closing of that temple, and by the re-ordaining of tithes and firstfruits, the king himself setting the example. Everywhere the work glows, everywhere there is plenty; the work of God is no more starved, and sacred "barns" and storehouses have to be "prepared" for tithes, which in their "heaps" were so plentiful that they take the name—auspicious omen—of "free-will offerings" (ver. 14). In this busy, happy, holy scene, it is not difficult to pick out, even in the human elements of it, four features which embody noble principles, offer inspiring example, and lend dignity to our faith in the possibilities of human nature when once divinely set on the pursuit of the right. We notice—

I. THE THOUGHT, DESIRE, DEVOTION TO GOOD, OF ONE MAN BECOME THE ADOPTED EXAMPLE, THE CREED, AND THE HEARTY PRACTICE OF A VERY ARMY, THAT SEEMS THEREUPON TO NEED NO OTHER TRAINING. (Vers. 20, 21, 1, 2, 8.)

II. THE DEEPEST SOUNDINGS OF RELIGIOUS MEMORIES, AND RELIGIOUS FEELINGS FITTED TO PRODUCE, AND ACTUALLY PRODUCING, THE TRUE PRACTICAL LIFE. Every grateful work of this chapter was the outcome of the religious heart-stirrings recorded in the former.

III. In our moral and spiritual life (whether as individuals or as communities of people), when years have accumulated upon us, with all their mixed contents, a merciless destruction of the old wrong is the way to lay sure foundations of construction. Hezekiah had found "good and right and truth" nothing less than *choked* up of evil when he entered on his reign. But the key-note of his reformation was its thoroughness and completeness, and his own heartiness of work, in the "service of the house of God, *and in the Law, and in the commandments*" (vers. 20, 21, 2, 4, and *passim*).

IV. Upon all the rightest and hardest work it is that there follows the going home in peace and benediction. (Vers. 1, 21.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*After the excitement.* And now what next? The services and the feasts are over; the temple door is closed; the tables are taken down; the musical instruments are laid aside in their places; the programme has been completed—the extended programme. What now shall that excited, enthusiastic multitude do? There is—

I. The peculiar peril of the hour. There is no hour of greater moral danger—such is our human nature—than that immediately following great religious excitement. The leaders of revivals are well aware that this is so. There comes a certain reaction of the soul, a readiness to give way to other and to unworthy impulses; the highly strung system seeks relaxation, and becomes relaxed, and that is often found to be the enemy's opportunity; then he can sometimes find a footing, and do his deadly work. Hence the need for wisdom, and hence—

II. The necessity for action. When "all this was finished," when there was the danger of some kind of reaction and wrong-doing, all Israel went out "and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves," etc. This was something done in accordance with their religious convictions; it was action along the line of their new devotedness to Jehovah. It was *rightful action*, and, as such, it was timely, and it was serviceable. Whenever there is any kind of danger, *do something that is right;* get to some useful work. It may not be of the highest kind; it may not be particularly meritorious or eminently useful; but so that it is rightful action of some kind, it is well. Peril passes off in labour, in wholesome exertion. If a man is doing anything which can be honestly considered by him to be done unto the Lord, he is in the way of safety and of wisdom.

III. The piety of removal. Ordinarily we can show our spirit of obedience by shunning the evil thing; by avoiding it; by "turning from it and passing away" (Prov. iv. 15), or simply by declining to touch it. But there are times and cases when this does not suffice; when our wisdom is not merely to shut the eye or to tighten the hand, but to bring the axe and to smite to the ground, and to break in pieces. Such was the wisdom of Israel in regard to all images, altars, groves, "high places." Their existence was too strong a temptation for those times; true piety was shown in their abolition, in sweeping them from sight, in clearing the temptation wholly from the view. Such is often our wisdom, our piety now. The wine-cup must be banished from the table, and even from the house. The cards must be thrown into the fire; the favourite amusement must be kept well out of reach. There *are* those—perhaps they are more numerous than is supposed—whose devotion to their Master is most wisely shown by an act of abolition; by placing beyond access the temptation that has again and again proved to be too strong for them. The idol must not even be kept in the cabinet; it must be broken in pieces.

IV. The wisdom of thoroughness in all destructive service. They went on their way with their work of destruction, "until they had utterly destroyed them all." To leave any of those objects at all would have been like leaving weeds in the soil; they needed to be thoroughly uprooted. For the act of destruction to be of any lasting virtue, it was essential that it should be complete. If we are bent on destroying any vice in our nature, or ridding ourselves of any harmful habit in our life, the only thing we can do is to *extirpate utterly* that which is wrong; to sweep it away without reserve;

to lay the axe to the root of the "evil tree." It is useless to cut weeds; they must be torn out of the soil.

V. THE HOUR FOR SACRIFICE IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE. There no doubt went to the creation of these images and altars much that was valuable in its way. There had been expended on them labour, skill, affection, piety (after its kind). There were connected with them some old and, probably, some tender domestic associations. But while they were thus costly, they must go down and disappear in the interest of truth and pure religion. Their costliness must not save them when they stood in the way of the nation's true piety and real prosperity. Nor may the costliness of any treasure we possess save it from removal from before our eyes, if it stand (1) between us and our Master; (2) between us and our moral and spiritual integrity; (3) between us and our usefulness; (4) between us and eternal life. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee," etc.—C.

Vers. 2—10.—*The service of the consecrated life, and of the substance.* Hezekiah, as soon as the excitement of the great Passover and of the subsequent destruction of all idolatrous symbols was over, made wise arrangements for the regular service of Jehovah. And this included—

I. THE SERVICE OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE; that, namely, of the priests and the Levites (ver. 2). This service was threefold: 1. *Discharging sacred functions* at the altar; doing for the people that which only consecrated men could do—presenting their sacrifices to Jehovah, thus standing between their fellows and their God, and constituting a medium of communion between them and him. 2. *Inquiry into and acquisition of all possible knowledge* of the Law (ch. xvii. 9; Deut. xxxiii. 10). 3. *Conducting the service of song* (ver. 2), and teaching the people the Law which they had themselves learned. There are many in the Christian Church who have undertaken to offer to their Divine Lord a consecrated life; and it devolves on them to yield to him their strength in these three ways. (1) *Ministration* in his house or elsewhere; the special service which the minister of Christ, as such, can render; praying to God for his people, or helping them to draw nigh to God—a very valuable, indeed inestimable, service. (2) *Earnest thought* and inquiry; becoming more and more fully acquainted with the mind of Christ as that is revealed in his Word or in his providence, or through the experience or research of other servants of his. (3) *Utterance* of the truth thus acquired; by teaching or preaching, in the sanctuary, or the school, or the house, personally or instrumentally. For the advancement of the kingdom of Christ it is needful that there should be a large number of men, answering to the priests and Levites, who shall regularly give a consecrated life to the service of the Lord.

II. THE SERVICE OF THE SUBSTANCE. We have a very interesting instance here recorded of the full and cheerful dedication of the substance to the cause of God. Led as well as taught by Hezekiah, the people responded with tithes and firstfruits, so that there were "heaps" in the temple courts, even when everything had been taken that was required (ver. 10). Even the remainder was "this great store." The scene suggests the truths: 1. That the offering of our substance is a *most appropriate* method of sacred service. How can we better express our gratitude to the great Giver of every good thing of every kind than by dedicating to him and to his service some serious proportion of the produce of our strength and skill? 2. That those who urge others to show this grace should be forward to illustrate it themselves (ver. 3). 3. That from those who have the greater privileges may be expected a very clear encouragement by example (ver. 4). 4. That, if rightly addressed, the people of God may be trusted to make a fair and even a liberal response (vers. 5, 6). 5. That such service, rendered in a religious spirit, will draw down the Divine blessing in abundance (ver. 10; and see Mal. iii. 10).—C.

Vers. 11—21.—*Systematic Church finance.* Hezekiah was careful to provide for the distribution of the firstfruits and tithes and special offerings among the priests and Levites. So he had cells, or chambers, constructed for their reception (ver. 11), and every needful arrangement made for the due apportionment of all that was stored among those for whom it was intended. There are three points worthy of consideration.

I. THE DISTINCTLY SACRED CHARACTER OF CHURCH FINANCE. What was given here was placed within the precincts of the temple, for it was given *to the Lord* while it was appropriated to his ministers. It was a religious act on the part of the donors, and not less so on the part of those whose special duty it was to distribute it. "They brought in the dedicated things *faithfully*" (ver. 12); and "according to their fidelity did they show themselves holy in regard to the holy;" *i.e.* "they acted in a holy manner with the holy gifts, distributed them disinterestedly and impartially" (Keil). There is no reason why both the giving of money to the cause of God (and included in this is the contribution to the sustenance of the Christian ministry) and also the allocation of all such money should not be a thoroughly devout and pious action. It may be rendered as truly "unto the Lord" as the singing of a hymn or the delivery of a discourse. It should be a sacred service, offered conscientiously, devoutly, holily.

II. SYSTEMATIC COLLECTION OF CHURCH FINANCE. While considerable room was left under the Law for spontaneous liberality and for special offerings under peculiar circumstances, there were certain regulations as to tithes and firstfruits (ver. 5). These latter were not optional, but obligatory; at the same time, they do not seem to have been recoverable by legal process; but they point to systematic contribution not unattended with special and spontaneous bestowments. And this surely is the right principle in the Christian Church. 1. Let every man consider what proportion of his income, considering (1) the amount of his receipts, and also (2) the measure of his liabilities, he can possibly devote to the cause of God and man, of religion and philanthropy; and let him set that apart. 2. Let every one of us be prompted to give special help whenever some specially powerful appeal is made to our spiritual convictions or our human sympathies.

III. SYSTEMATIC DISTRIBUTION. This is something which must depend upon the constitution of each particular Church, and must vary according to that constitution. But there are some general principles, partly suggested by these verses. 1. Let every care be taken that *all* that is contributed be devoted and distributed, none being wasted or perverted. Here is scope for carefulness and for faithfulness. 2. Let the necessities of those on whom God has laid the weightier domestic burdens be generously met. 3. Let those who are engaged in the less prominent places be as much regarded as those who are "serving at Jerusalem" (see vers. 15, 19). 4. Let men of acknowledged probity and capacity have charge of the treasury (see vers. 12—14).—C.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Earnestness.* Perhaps *the* characteristic of Hezekiah was moral earnestness. There was no hesitation or half-heartedness about him. What he did he did "with all his heart," as is stated in the text. Under his direction everything was carried out and completed with a vigour and determination that showed that his heart as well as his hand was in his work. Hence his success in accomplishing that in which even Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Jotham, failed; by him "the high places were removed" (ver. 1); and hence the historian could say, shortly but significantly, of him that "he prospered." Regarding earnestness itself, we may consider—

I. ITS ESSENTIALLY SPIRITUAL NATURE. It is not a question of mere temperament; it is a distinctly moral quality. Men may be endowed with a very ardent nature, and they may, as a consequence of their natural disposition, without any praise or blame attaching to them, espouse any and every cause they adopt with the greatest warmth, throwing into it an almost consuming energy. Yet they may be far from being earnest men. Such moral earnestness as Hezekiah had, which was the glory and crown of his character, was more than this, was different from this. It was the consecration and concentration of his powers to the full performance of that which he saw to be right. It was the conscientious and determined keeping to the front, holding in full view of his soul those things which he knew to be of the first importance, which he felt entailed the weightiest obligation. Earnestness was with him, as it should be with us, not a constitutional peculiarity, but a spiritual force.

II. THE DIRECTIONS IT SHOULD TAKE. Just those which it took with the wise King of Judah; he sought and wrought the good and the right and the true thing. 1. *The pursuit of truth.* The first thing for a man to know is—What is the truth? Who is right? What is our life? Who and what are we ourselves? What can we accomplish on the earth? What is the range and what are the limits of our powers?

To whom are we accountable for all we are and do? When we die, shall we live again? Has God spoken to us now in the Person of Jesus Christ? It becomes every man patiently, diligently, determinately, *earnestly*, to seek an answer to these questions until he finds it. 2. *The acquisition of rectitude of character.* To become right with God, to be right at heart, to be governed by right principles, to be moved and prompted by a right spirit, to have a character that is sound and strong,—this also is a thing to be earnestly endeavoured after until it is attained. 3. *The accomplishment of that which is good and useful.* It should be our most earnest hope and effort to live a life that will be one of faithful service; and, in particular, to be the servants of God. Here the earnestness of Hezekiah shone forth most brightly. "In every work that he began in the service of the house of God . . . to seek his God, he did it with all his heart." To promote the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ, and in this way to contribute toward the elevation and well-being of our kind,—this is a direction in which *our* earnestness should stand out strong and clear. Let us be unmistakably in earnest in all the work we do for our Divine Saviour—for him who gave himself for us. Let us live and labour "with *all* our heart," and with *all* our strength, never flagging nor failing, maintaining our devotedness through the heats of youth, and through the vigour of manhood, past the golden days of prime, still "bringing forth fruit in old age."

III. ITS SUCCESS. Hezekiah "prospered;" he prospered generally because God loved him and smiled upon him, and was "with him." He prospered also in those particular spheres in which he manifested so much earnestness. It is earnestness that *does* prosper. Indifference does not leave the starting-post. Impulsiveness soon turns back. Half-heartedness is weary long before the course is run. But earnestness clasps the goal and wins the prize.—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*A religious reformation in the days of Hezekiah.* I. A POPULAR CRUSADE AGAINST IDOLATRY. (Ver. 1.) 1. *When begun.* "When all this was finished," *i.e.* after the temple had been purified and rededicated (ch. xxix.), and the Passover celebrated (ch. xxx.). Everything in its order. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;" "a time to pluck up that which is planted;" "a time to break down;" "a time to rend" (Eccles. iii. 1, 2, 3, 7). This time had arrived in Judah, and partially also in Israel, in the days of Hezekiah. 2. *By whom undertaken.* "All Israel that were present," *i.e.* all the members of the two kingdoms (Judah and Israel proper) that were in the metropolis observing the Passover. That they felt themselves stirred to such a vigorous assault upon the instruments and institutions of idolatry was an indication of the depth to which they had been moved by the high ceremonial in which they had borne a part. A pity was it that the nation's zeal for the true religion was so evanescent, not in Judah alone (ch. xxxiii. 2, 9), but also in Ephraim (Hos. vi. 4). It is no contradiction to this that the Book of Kings ascribes this destruction of the altars, etc., to the king (2 Kings xviii. 4). 3. *To what extent carried.* (1) Geographically, the wave of reformation swept over all Judah and Benjamin, *i.e.* all the southern kingdom, and over Ephraim and Manasseh, *i.e.* a considerable portion of the northern kingdom—that portion which had furnished feast-pilgrims to Jerusalem. (2) Religiously, it paused not until within those territories it had swept away every vestige of idol-worship. The iconoclastic zeal of the people "brake in pieces the pillars or obelisks, hewed down the Asherim, and brake down the high places and the altars, until it had destroyed them all." A similar outbreak against the symbols of idolatry, only on a smaller scale, had taken place in the days of Jehoiada, immediately after the fall of Athaliah and the coronation of Joash (ch. xxiii. 17, which see); never before had the land experienced such a purgation of idolatrous institutions and instruments. So thorough-going was it that even the brazen serpent made by Moses in the wilderness (Numb. xxi. 9), and in Hezekiah's day become an object of idolatrous veneration, was called Nehushtan, "a piece of brass," and ground to pieces (2 Kings xviii. 4).

II. A KINGLY ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRUE RELIGION. (Vers. 2—4.) 1. *The public ordinances of religion arranged.* (1) The priests and the Levites were divided into courses according to the plan of David (1 Chron. xxiv. 3, etc.), as in the reformation under Jehoiada. (2) Each man was appointed to the special service for which he was designed—each had his own work to attend to and perform. In the New Testament Church Christ gives "to every man his work" (Mark xiii. 34). (3) The works distributed amongst them were such as pertained to the temple-worship, viz. the offering of sacrifice, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, and the ministering, *i.e.* giving thanks and praising by means of vocal and instrumental music, "in the gates of the camp of the Lord"—a remarkable expression (see next homily). 2. *The state service of religion provided for.* The expense of keeping up that part of the temple-worship which was, properly speaking, national, *i.e.* the morning and evening burnt offerings, with the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the set feasts prescribed in the Law of Jehovah (Numb. xxviii., xxix.), the king took upon himself and discharged out of his own possessions (ch. xxxii. 27—29). As the crown wealth was, to all intents and purposes, the nation's property, the act of the king was right; still, in so far as the national wealth was under his control, his act was a deed of liberality. Whether kings or parliaments under the Christian dispensation are required or permitted to allocate national wealth to the support of religion may be open to debate; there is no room for doubting that neither kings nor statesmen are hindered from devoting portions of their own wealth to the cause of Christ, *i.e.* to the up-keep and propagation of the true religion. 3. *A maintenance assigned to the ministers of religion.* The portion which belonged to the priests and Levites by the Law of Jehovah, *i.e.* the firstfruits (Exod. xxiii. 19; Numb. xviii. 12, 13; Deut. xxvi. 2—4), and the tithes of land and beast (Lev. xxvii. 30—33; Numb. xviii. 21—24)—the firstfruits being assigned specially to the priests, and the tithes to the whole tribe of Levi—the king commanded the people residing in Jerusalem to render. Under the Christian dispensation the support of the ministers of religion devolves exclusively upon believers (1 Cor. ix. 7—14; 2 Cor. xi. 7—12; Gal. vi. 6; 1 Thess. ii. 6). Kings and parliaments in their official capacities have not been charged with the duty of supporting ministers of religion out of public revenues.

Lessons. 1. It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing, such as the suppression of idolatry. 2. It is not permissible under the gospel to suppress idolatry by violence, but only by argument and the force of truth. 3. The lawfulness of state establishments of religion in Christian times cannot be inferred from the existence of such an institution among the Hebrews. 4. Compulsory payments in support of Christ's religion are indefensible. 5. It is open to all to practise Christian liberality.—W.

Ver. 2.—"*The camp of the Lord.*" I. To what this designation belonged? 1. *To the tabernacle.* (1 Chron. ix. 19.) The religious centre in Israel from the days of the conquest till the times of David and Solomon. 2. *To the temple.* (Ver. 2.) On Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, which Ahaz had closed during the latter years of his reign (ch. xxviii. 24), but Hezekiah had now opened, cleansed, and rededicated to the worship of Jehovah (ch. xxix., xxx.). 3. *To the Church of God.* (1) Under the Old Testament dispensation (Lev. xiv. 8; Numb. v. 2; Deut. xxiii. 10), and (2) under the New Testament dispensation (Rev. xx. 9).

II. What this designation meant. 1. *That the Lord had pitched his tent there.* This was true (1) of the tabernacle, which was usually styled the dwelling (Exod. xxv. 9), and, when finished, was filled with the symbol of the Divine presence, the glory of the Lord (Exod. xl. 34, 35); (2) of the temple of Solomon, which also was similarly named (ch. vi. 2) and inhabited (ch. v. 13, 14); (3) of the Old Testament Church as distinguished from its institutions (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14); and (4) of the New Testament Church or assembly of believers (Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20; 2 Cor. vi. 16). 2. *That those amongst whom the Lord dwelt were warriors.* This, again, was true (1) of Israel, in the wilderness and in Canaan, her principal occupation in the latter place being fighting, not always with the Lord's enemies, as should have been the case, but frequently with one another; and worshipping, though much oftener idols than Jehovah. So should it be true (2) of Christian believers, as it is when they in any degree realize the ideal of their vocation—to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. vi. 12), and to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. ii. 3).—W.

Vers. 5—19.—*A nation's liberality; or, a lecture on tithes.* I. The imposition of the tithes. Done by the commandment of Hezekiah (ver. 5), not, however, acting in his own name and by his own authority, but merely publishing the Law of Jehovah for the maintenance of those who conducted the temple service. Under the old economy Jehovah was the sole Head of the Church, as Christ is under the new. For the Hebrew Church the exclusive source of legislation was not the sovereigns or prophets of the nation, but Jehovah; as for the Christian Church it is neither kings nor parliaments, neither Church dignitaries nor Church courts, but Jesus Christ. That which gave binding authority to Hezekiah's commandment was not that it was "the word of a king" (Eccles. viii. 4), but that it was the ordinance of Jehovah as declared by Moses (Exod. xxiii. 19; Lev. xxvii. 30—33; Numb. xviii. 12, 13, 21, 24; Deut. xxvi. 2—4). That which lends weight to human legislation in the Christian Church is the circumstance that it accords with the teaching of Christ in the New Testament Scriptures.

II. THE PAYING OF THE TITHES, ETC. 1. *Promptly.* "As soon as the commandment came abroad," the children of Israel began to pour in their contributions (ver. 5). The absence of delay showed their zeal was not fanatical, but religious, and not seeming, but real—the last thing to be affected by a man's religion being his purse; perhaps also it proved that the king's liberality had been not without its influence (ch. xxx. 24), as certainly it imparted additional value to their gifts. *Qui cito dat bis dat.* 2. *Faithfully.* Nothing was omitted or evaded that the Law enjoined. The people presented "the firstfruits of corn, and wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field;" paid in the tithes or tenth parts Jehovah had assigned as a portion for the whole tribe of Levi (ver. 5), as well as the tenth parts of such things as were dedicated to the Lord (ver. 6); and rendered free-will offerings to Jehovah over and above what had been directly commanded (ver. 14). 3. *Unweariedly.* It was no sudden fit of liberality which had overtaken them and quickly expended itself. The firstfruits presenting, tithe-paying, and free-will offering went on for four months (ver. 7). Many can do a generous deed when seized by a momentary impulse, but are wholly unable to bear the strain of continuous giving. That these ancient givers grew not tired of their liberality was a proof that it proceeded from principle rather than from impulse—showed they were acting more from respect to the Divine Law than from a desire to gratify their own feelings. 4. *Abundantly.* So extraordinary was the outburst of liberality, that not only had the priests and Levites obtained the most ample maintenance, having had enough to eat and plenty over (ver. 10), but so fast came the people's offerings in that they were obliged to be piled up in heaps (ver. 6), while so liberal had they been that, when the tithe season ended, so great a store remained (ver. 10), that the priests and Levites were guaranteed against want throughout the rest of the year. The Christian Church might herein find an example. It is poor policy, besides being unscriptural (Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 14), for Churches or congregations to starve or underpay their ministers. 5. *Generally.* Most likely there were those who refused to comply with the king's commandment, acting from a spirit of avarice which could not bear to part with their goods, or a spirit of unbelief which secretly hankered after the false gods they had formerly worshipped, or from a spirit of indifference, because they had no real interest in religion; and doubtless there were those who gave grudgingly and of necessity, adhering strictly to the letter of the Law, never going beyond the bond if they could help it, and certainly never throwing in any free-will offerings; but manifestly also the main body of the people, in the northern kingdom (ver. 5) no less than in the southern (ver. 6), yielded obedience to the king's commandment, and fell in with the order of the day.

III. THE STORING OF THE TITHES. 1. *The chambers for their reception.* These were prepared in the house of the Lord (ver. 11), in accordance with instructions from Hezekiah, but whether they were old cells or new cannot be determined. 2. *The officers for their supervision.* (1) Two superior—Cononiah the Levite, and Shimei his brother (ver. 12). (2) Ten inferior—Jehiel and Azaziah, Nahath and Asahel, Jerimoth and Jozabad, Eliel and Ismachiah, Mahath and Benaiah—who acted as subordinates and assistants to the two chiefs, who derived their authority from Hezekiah the king, the chief magistrate in the state, and Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok (ver. 10), and ruler of the house of God (ver. 13).

IV. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE TITHES, ETC. 1. *The distributors.* (1) The chief—Kore, signifying "Partridge" (Gesenius), a name borne by the son of Ebiasaph (1 Chron. ix. 19), and here by the son of Imnah. By descent a Levite, he was by occupation "a porter towards the east," *i.e.* keeper of the king's gate on the east side of the temple. (2) The assistants, six in number, named Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, resided in the cities of the priests in different parts of the country. 2. *The distribution.* (1) Kore distributed to those priests and Levites who served in the temple, first of such things as were required for the maintenance of themselves and the male children over three years of age who accompanied their parents (being priests) to Jerusalem when the turn came for these to serve, and secondly of such things as were necessary for any portion of their temple service. The distribution to the priests was according to fathers' houses (ver. 17)—so much for every house, according to its size; that to the Levites was to individuals from twenty years old and upwards, according to a carefully prepared register. (2) The assistants distributed necessary portions to those priests and Levites who resided in the priests' cities, not being at the time engaged in active duty at the temple, and to the families of these as well as of those who were engaged (vers. 15—19). Both parts of this work were performed with scrupulous fidelity (ver. 18); the distributors "acted in a holy manner with the holy gifts," distributing them "impartially and disinterestedly to all who had any claim to them" (Keil).

Learn: 1. The duty of Christ's people to support the ministers of religion. 2. The voluntary character of all acceptable payments towards religion. 3. The necessity of order and system in Church finance. 4. The excellence of Christian liberality.—W.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The secret of prosperity.* I. A LOFTY CONCEPTION OF WHAT TRUE PROSPERITY IS. 1. *Negatively.* It is not personal, material, and temporal aggrandizement, inasmuch as one might gain the whole world, and yet lose his own soul (Matt. xvi. 26); thus seeming to succeed, but in reality only gaining a disastrous failure. 2. *Positively.* It is working that which is good, right, and faithful before the Lord as Hezekiah did—constructing a life in harmony with the Divine ideal of what a life should be, viz. (1) good, such as God can approve, admire, and pronounce excellent (Gen. i. 31); (2) right, according with the law of duty prescribed for God's intelligent creatures; and (3) faithful, in the sense of proceeding from a spirit of fidelity towards God. A life fashioned after this model is prosperous, no matter what its external environment may be.

II. A RIGHT IDEA OF HOW TRUE PROSPERITY SHOULD BE SOUGHT. 1. *Generally, by seeking God.* Only in the knowledge and service, favour and fellowship of God, can the ideal of life above outlined be realized. To designate that career successful which has never proposed for its aim, and consequently never reached as its end, a personal acquaintance with God—which has never occupied itself with either ascertaining or doing God's will—is simply to misapply language. 2. *Particularly, by rendering to God acceptable worship and true obedience.* To worship and obey God the chief end of man. No life can be successful which offers its homage and service to another than God, or offers only homage self-devised, and service self-directed. Both in worship and in duty the Law of God, with its specific commandments, must rule.

III. A CORRECT METHOD OF PURSUING AFTER TRUE PROSPERITY. It must be sought after: 1. *Always.* Hezekiah kept the above aim before him "in every work that he began." Mere occasional efforts after goodness will result in nothing but failure. 2. *Earnestly.* Hezekiah sought it with all his heart. Half-hearted endeavours can only terminate in feeble achievements. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," etc. (Eccles. ix. 10); "This one thing I do" (Phil. iii. 13). 3. *Religiously.* Whatever works Hezekiah engaged in were done "before the Lord his God," as in his sight and for his glory. So should it be with Christians. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink," etc. (1 Cor. x. 31); and "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord," etc. (Col. iii. 23).—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

This chapter of thirty-three verses is paralleled by the sixty-one verses that begin with 2 Kings xviii. 13 and end with xix. 37; and by Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii. Our chapter gives, as might be anticipated, but a very partial and somewhat broken account, therefore, of this stretch of Hezekiah's career,

and no adequate impression whatever of the great power of some portions of the parallel. A close comparison of the two places leaves us tolerably clear as to the order and consecutiveness of the history, although perhaps not entirely so. The style of our present chapter betrays the usual marks of disjointedness, in the case of extracts from fuller history, in the indefiniteness of its connecting phrases, found, *e.g.*, in vers. 1, 9, 24, 31. Our compiler, by omission, seems to shield Hezekiah, probably designedly, from the disrepute that must be felt to attach to his want of faith, courage, and fidelity in his trusteeship of the sacred property of the temple as indicated by what is written in 2 Kings xviii. 14—16, of which see further *infra*.

Ver. 1.—**The establishment thereof**; translate, *and this* (his) *truth*. The word is the same with the third of the trio (see above), as given in ver. 20 of the foregoing chapter. The evident meaning intended to be conveyed is, "After these things and this truth," *i.e.* truthfulness *of conduct* on the part of Hezekiah, the strict rendering being, "After the things and the truth this." **Sennacherib . . . came . . . entered into Judah . . . encamped against the fenced cities . . . thought to win.** This verse and these items of it may without any inconvenient strain be made conterminous with just one verse in Kings, the thirteenth of 2 Kings xviii. The king personally seems to have devoted himself especially to the siege of Lachish, an Amoritish city indeed originally, and a place of great strength of position, but conquered by Judah (Josh. x. 26, 31—35; ch. xi. 9; xxv. 27; and *infra* here and in parallel). This invasion of Sennacherib (Herod., ii. 141), son of Sargon, may be with moderate certainty affixed to the date B.C. 701. *Thought to win.* A weak rendering for the preferable *purposed or boasted to break them* (Gen. vii. 11).

Ver. 2.—**When Hezekiah saw . . . and that he purposed . . . Jerusalem.** Whether the three verses of ill omen already alluded to (2 Kings xviii. 14—16) may be read precedent to this verse, and purport that the bribes *had been paid*, and yet had failed of their object, so that Hezekiah was now compelled to brace himself to the occasion, and "took counsel," etc. (next verse); or whether this verse dates (as some think) the quailing heart of Hezekiah, and an *offer* or *part* payment of treasure by Hezekiah to Sennacherib, which only increased his insolence, as immediately now related, is uncertain, perhaps. In the face of the emphatic language of the three verses of the parallel, and in consideration of the possible motives as suggested above for our compiler omitting the matter altogether, we incline to the former opinion. That would have the effect of making this verse say that when Hezekiah had his eyes opened to the failure of his bribe—a waste payment, for that Sennacherib still "purposed to fight against Jerusalem"—he finally proceeded to take the right steps. However, the witness and indications of Isa. xxii. 13—19; xxix. 2—4, may go some way to shield Hezekiah from the entire blame. The silence of our compiler on the whole matter is the one residuum of fact, and unfortunate in its suggestion.

Ver. 3.—**To stop the waters of the fountains . . . without the city.** These fountains or springs were probably those represented by *En Rogel*, on the *Ophel* spur or very large mound, or fortified hill (mistranslated possibly from that circumstance "tower," in 2 Kings v. 24; Isa. xxxii. 14), on the south-east of the temple. The object of Hezekiah is obvious enough. The word (סָתַם) for "stopping" occurs in all thirteen times—twice in piel in Genesis, once in niph. in Nehemiah, and ten times in kal in Kings, Chronicles, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Psalms. It is for all material purposes very uniformly rendered in all these places by the word "stop" eight times, and otherwise "shut" or "closed," or to carry a derived meaning, "hidden" or "secret." If the word "shut" or "shut off" were employed, it would fit every occasion. So we are not told here how he *stopped* the fountain or fountains, but that he shut the waters off from one direction and guided them into another, viz. by a conduit running *westward* from the springs and the Gihon (*i.e.* the brook) flowing naturally down the Tyropœan valley to a pool prepared for it in the city (see our ver. 30; and 2 Kings xviii. 17; xx. 20; Ecclus. xlviii. 17; and Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 339). This pool was very probably none other than the pool of Siloam.

Ver. 4.—**The brook that ran through the midst of the land.** Compare the Septuagint, which has it, "through the midst *of the city*;" and compare foregoing verse and note; and see again above reference to Conder's 'Handbook' at length.

Ver. 5.—**He strengthened himself**; *i.e.*, as in our several previous instances of the occurrence of the phrase (1 Chron. xi. 10; ch. xii. 1; xxv. 11; xxvi. 8), he took all possible means to make himself and people and city strong to withstand the invader. **All the wall that was broken** (see Isa. xxii. 9). Although we read that the devastation wrought by Joash (ch. xxv. 23) was very largely repaired by Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 9) and by Jotham (ch. xxvii. 3), it is not explicitly said that the broken four hundred cubits of wall, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, were made absolutely good again, although in the matter of towers and fortifications much was evidently done. Note also the word "all" here, side by side with the "much" of ch. xxvii. 3. **And raised** (it) **up to the towers.** Discard this Authorized Version rendering. The meaning cannot be certainly pronounced upon, but perhaps it may be intended to say that he *heightened* the towers. The objection is that the same verb is wanted for the next clause, and that its rendering would need to be there slightly reduced again to a mere statement of raising from the ground (*i.e.* building) another wall without. **Repaired Millo** (see note, 1 Chron. xi. 8).

Ver. 6.—**The street of the gate**; translate, *the wide area at the gate*, etc.; what gate is not specified, but presumably either "the gate of Ephraim," which would be the one opposed to the camp of the besiegers, or possibly "the corner gate" (ch. xxv. 23; and Conder's 'Handbook,' pp. 343—345).

Ver. 7.—Several of the descriptive dramatic touches of Isa. xxii. 4—14 are forcible and apt commentary to this verse.

Ver. 8.—(See 2 Kings vi. 16; Jer. xvii. 5.) The admirable *language* of Hezekiah here quickens our desire to feel sure that this was after (and after genuine repentance for) his faithlessness (2 Kings xviii. 14—16).

Ver. 9.—The passage beginning with this verse and ending with ver. 21 represents the much fuller parallel (2 Kings xviii. 17—xix. 37), fifty-eight verses in all. This much greater fulness is owing to the greater length at which the language of defiance on the part of Sennacherib and his appointed officers is narrated, and the matter of his subsequent letter; also the prayer of Hezekiah; and his application to Isaiah, with the reply of the latter to it. On the other side, there is very little additional in our narrative, a few words heightening the effect in our vers. 18, 20, 21, constituting the whole of such additional matter. The vague mark of time, after this, with which our present verse opens, merely says that in due course of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah, and attack of the fenced cities (ver. 1), he proceeds to send his servants and his insolent defiances to the metropolis, Jerusalem itself. The three words in italics, "*himself laid siege*," should evidently give place to the single word "remained" or "was;" *i.e.* he and all his host with him remained at, or opposite to, Lachish, while his servants went to defy Jerusalem in his name.

Ver. 10.—**In the siege.** This Authorized Version rendering is manifestly incorrect, though, if we simply omit the article, and render *in siege*, we shall probably have Sennacherib's exact idea. He spoke not of the literal technical thing siege, but of the distress and confinement that the apprehension of the siege did not fail to bring. This so to say moral tone to the rendering of the word (בְּמָצוֹר) is much to be preferred to that of the margin, "*in the fortress* or *stronghold*."

Ver. 11.—The policy of Sennacherib, in the direct attempt to undermine Hezekiah by appealing straight to his people, instead of to himself or his ministers of state, is yet more pronounced in expression, as seen in 2 Kings xviii. 26, 27.

Ver. 12.—This misrepresenting of Hezekiah's pious actions is thought by some to have been innocent ignorance on the part of Sennacherib. Yet it is scarcely credible.

Ver. 13.—Some of these deeds of Sennacherib and his fathers, *i.e.* predecessors in the kingdom of Assyria, are mentioned in detail in 2 Kings xvii., *passim*.

Ver. 15.—The urgency of Sennacherib's appeal to the people was of course his way of trying to save work of actual siege, fighting, etc., to himself and his army. The how much less of the message of Sennacherib probably meant that his estimate of the your God, *i.e.* the God of Israel, was measured partly by the comparative smallness and unwarlike character of the nation of Judah, when set side by side with the great heathen nations, and partly by the spiritual and invisible character and being of God, little intelligible to such a one as Sennacherib.

Ver. 16.—**And his servants spake yet more.** A glimpse of the fact that the compiler of our book very designedly excerpted only what he thought needful from very much more abundant resources.

Ver. 17.—**Letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel** (so 2 Kings xix. 8—14). The rumour of the approach of "Tirhakah King of Ethiopia" (ver. 9) quickened Sennacherib's anxiety to make short work with the conflict at Jerusalem, by intimidating the people to an early collapse of their resistance.

Ver. 18.—**In the Jews' speech** (see again 2 Kings xviii. 26, 27). The last three clauses of this verse are additional matter to that contained in the parallel.

Ver. 19.—**As against the gods of the people of the earth, the work of the hands of men.** Our compiler, at all events, signalizes the difference, which Sennacherib worse than minimizes, between the God of Israel and the so-called gods of the surrounding heathen nations.

Ver. 20.—For the prayer of Hezekiah, see 2 Kings xix. 14—19; and for the place of the prayer or prayers of Isaiah, and the indications of their having been offered, see alike ch. xix. 4—7, and the verses of the grand passage, 20—34.

Ver. 21.—The exact matter corresponding with this one verse is embraced by vers. 35—37 in the parallel (2 Kings xix.). It gives the number of slain as a hundred and eighty-five thousand. It does not speak of the heavy proportion of leaders and captains lost. It leads us to suppose that for all survivors it was a surprise in the morning—that silent vision of the dead in such vast array. Stating, on the other hand, in mere historic dry detail, the return of Sennacherib to his own land, his dwelling at Nineveh, and assassination, in the house of Nisroch "his god," at the hands of his own two sons, mentioned by name Adrammelech and Sharezer, who had to fly for it to Armenia (*Ararat*), it does not show the obviously designed moral touch of our compiler, **So he returned with shame of face to his own land,** nor the similarly complexioned description of the time, place, and agents of his assassination. Lastly, it gives Esarhaddon as the name of his successor on the throne.

Ver. 22.—This verse, with the notification of Hezekiah's great deliverance from the hand of the King of Assyria, summarizes also his various other deliverances, with tacit reference to such suggestion of other conflicts as we have in 2 Kings xviii. 7, 8. **Guided them on every side.** The Septuagint reads, *gave them rest*. This suits the connection as regards meaning best, and also as regards the immediately following adverb, "on every side." It has also in our present book the correspondences of ch. xiv. 6; xv. 15; and especially ch. xx. 30, with the Hebrew words of which, an easily supposed rectification brings it into exact agreement.

Ver. 23.—**Presents to Hezekiah.** The "precious things" (מִגְדָּנוֹת) of ch. xxi. 3.

Ver. 24.—The extreme brevity again of our compiler, in the account of Hezekiah's illness, and his passing so lightly over whatever in it cast shades upon his character and career, cannot escape our notice. Much fuller is the narrative of 2 Kings xx. 1—21. **Gave him a sign** (see 2 Kings xx. 8—11, and our ver. 31, middle clause. See also at length of the sickness of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii.).

Ver. 25.—The parallel, 2 Kings xx. 12—19 and Isa. xxxix., fully explain the circumstances here referred to, and we may conclude that Hezekiah's sin consisted in the spirit in which he acted, displaying his treasures, so that it was in the fullest sense a sin of "the heart."

Ver. 26.—**Hezekiah humbled himself.** Possibly the language of the nineteenth verse in the parallel is the one surviving historic trace of this. The language found in Jer. xxvi. 19 may be also a note of the same, though its dependence (see vers. 17, 18) on Micah iii. 12 seems to make it less likely.

Ver. 27.—If Hezekiah not only began to negotiate, but actually paid the precious metals, etc., with which he offered to buy off the invasion of Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 14—16), he may have become considerably recouped by the presents and gifts subsequently, liberally it would appear, brought to him (see our ver. 23), and it is possible that this may give us some further clue to where it was that his heart strayed, while displaying his wealth and treasures to the messengers of Berodach-Baladan King of Babylon.

Ver. 28.—**Cotes for flocks** should be rendered, conversely, *flocks to the stalls*, i.e. stalls full of flocks.

Ver. 30.—**Stopped the upper watercourse,** etc. (see our vers. 3, 4). What Hezekiah "stopped" was the spring, or more strictly access to it, and guided its prized waters down, probably by an underground channel, to Siloam, or else to the pool in the city which he had constructed and enclosed by that "another wall without" (ver. 5), west of the "city of David."

Ver. 31.—**Howbeit;** literally, *and thus*. The italic type dispensed with, the verse may be rendered, And thus with or among the ambassadors of the princes . . . God left him to, etc. *The princes.* This plural may be the *pluralis excellentiæ*, and designate the king himself, who doubtless issued the official command to the messengers to visit Hezekiah with gifts, etc., but not necessarily so. The word may betray the inquiries and curiosity of the princes of Babylon, under the king, the expression of which led to the embassy, so to call it.

Ver. 32.—**In the vision of Isaiah** (see Isa. i. 1).

Ver. 33.—**In the chiefest of the sepulchres;** literally, *in the ascent of the sepulchres;* i.e. in new burial-places, either on the ascent to the old ones, probably now full, or else *above* them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—23.—*The weakness that bodes strength; the defiant strength that bodes "shame of face."* One of the most fruitful sources of strength in the individual character is according to the trustfulness that may be in it—the absence, or all but entire absence, of it on the one hand, and the larger or lesser bulk of it on the other. Trustfulness is a sure turning-point—a determining feature in the original shaping and in the growing formation of any character. The direction in which that trustfulness goes out to exercise itself, or goes in quest of an object on which, in its lovingness, to lean, is watched often enough with trembling solicitude, and is a matter of intrinsic importance. It is undeniable that the trustful disposition often means that which is prone to trust too soon, too easily, and to its own hurt therefore. It often, also, goes with *too* little self-reliance. These are, however, the weaknesses incident to what is really a strong feature. Where a person is strongest, there, by many an analogy, may lurk some form of weakness, some snare. Once more, there is an opposite of trustfulness, that consists in suspiciousness, and not simply in too little trust. Of *such* an opposite nothing good can be said. But, even by the side of too little trust, the trustfulness that errs by excess must be considered to show to advantage, and really to gain advantage, unless the excess be to a manifestly foolish extent, and a thing of perpetual recurrence. The practical outcome of all is that, as between man and man, we distinguish the two expressions—trustfulness, and exercising trust—and we discriminate the two qualities which those expressions purport to describe. Such a distinction and such discrimination are more than necessary as between man and God. Implicit trust, constant trust, and all the loving trust of trustfulness, can never be misspent, never misdirected towards God. The example outlined before us in the first eight verses of this chapter is an instance of a notable effort and enterprise of *trust*, as compared with perhaps that afforded us by the life of Abraham and many others, which illustrated an habitual trustfulness. Let us learn—

I. THAT THE ULTIMATE GREATEST MATERIAL OF STRENGTH IS TRUST IN THE UNSEEN. Such trust is not only a last resource, an ungrateful last *resort*; it is the *matter* of strength, its *material*. "This is the victory that [even] overcometh the world . . . *faith*." This dictum of the apostle, who loved love so well, and was something less known for faith, may be held to carry the whole question. What a fine field of survey, what a wide horizon opens before us, when once we begin to try to count the achievements of faith! This faith in the Unseen, and in the Unseen ONE, is no mere matter of high contemplation; it works *with* trust. 1. The trust that characterizes an honest consciousness of *duty done* to the best and utmost of human ability, becomes at once a strong incentive of faith. 2. So also that trust which comes of a *clear discernment* of the incompetency of self when alone and unaided. 3. The very craving of trust helps the grand quality of faith. And, on the other hand, the reacting of the intelligent conviction of the existence and presence and favour of the great Master of all circumstance and all events is the very suggestion and nourishing of trust. These also have a very *spreading* nature (ver. 8). There are very many who learn trust and faith at second hand, if it may be so expressed, who have not *force* enough apparently in and of themselves, and without the inducement and encouragement of many examples, or, perhaps otherwise, of some very leading and remarkable example. And then, at the crisis—some crisis of great extremity—the sudden cry of prayer makes the whole scene burst into life; faith and trust are exchanged for fruition (vers. 20, 21). It was so now with Hezekiah and his people; it was often so in the history of other kings and people; and it is often so—how much oftener *might* it be?—in our individual life.

II. THAT THE EXTREMITY OF WEAKNESS IS DEFIANT TRUST IN SELF. Self-trust is, indeed, except under certain circumstances, nothing short of utter weakness; but the daring, defiant form of it presented by the narrative before us exceedingly and actively aggravates the mischief. *E.g.*: 1. The defiance that comes of overweening conceit of self is certain to *under*rate the strength of others (vers. 9—19). 2. The defiance that comes of an overbearing temper is certain to betray the owner of it into what must involve such moral fault as adds weakness to weakness. For instance, it does not fall short of *mocking* fellow-men, nor hesitate at all to do so! 3. The defiance that comes of impious disbelief of the one God, and infatuated reliance on no other but the god *self*, is merely another way of saying that the man guilty of it is already shut up within the smallest circle of resource. And with all this corresponds, again, the howl of the servants and soldiers of Sennacherib (ver. 18) against the besieged "people of Jerusalem that were on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them," in some mocking imitation of their venerated language; in place of the "prayer and cry to heaven" of Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet (ver. 20). That howl came of sense alone, and appealed to sense alone. So rude an attempt at intimidation of an enemy a very poor substitute for "prayer" to God for strength to prevail, and "cry" for his protecting and delivering mercy!

Vers. 24—26, 31.—*The shadow which Hezekiah casts on his own life's history.* The great commendation of Hezekiah, written in one word—his "goodness"—in our thirty-second verse, but somewhat more expressly in the parallel (2 Kings xviii. 5), which raised him to the very first rank with David and Jehoshaphat, may well be accepted as fully explained and sustained by the undeviating excellence of his administration of the kingdom. His reign is, at any rate, unsullied by any sins like those of David. Yet one error, one sin, and from its denunciation and punishment manifestly a grievously offensive one, is to be laid to his charge, and which seems to have consisted in a boastful ostentatiousness, on an occasion which presumably pre-eminently condemned it for untimeliness and inexpedience. The faithfulness, and yet the tenderness, of allusion to it, as made by our present writer (ver. 31), we cannot but notice, understand, and admire. But for the fuller suggestions that lie within it, they are to be sought and found in the parallel (2 Kings xx. 12—19), and in the writing of the Prophet Isaiah (xxxix., wonderfully prefaced by xxxviii.). From this part of the history of Hezekiah we may notice something to be learned as to—

I. THE SEED OF OCCASION. There are seeds—many, indeed—of *occasion*, besides those which, perhaps, we think more justly called seeds, viz. those of *cause*. They are to be thought on and feared, for they are the lighter and less visible; more approaching to a certain omnipresence, and wafted hither and thither on the gentlest of breezes, as well as the stiffest, they alight so softly, at most unsuspected times, and on spots most unsuspected. These occasion-seeds are, doubtless, often part of the very scheme and works of Providence. Designed to good, they are, like many of the completer manifestations of Providence, warped and wrested to evil. The exact origin of the severe "sickness unto death" of Hezekiah is nowhere told us. It looks uncommonly like an earlier "thorn in the flesh." The thorn in the flesh, out of which St. Paul made for himself such good history, turns to all the reverse with Hezekiah! His "thorn in the flesh" was sent because the all-seeing Eye saw this—that there was already sign of Hezekiah being exalted above measure (ver. 25) through the long run of mercy and prosperity vouchsafed to him, even though vouchsafed in harmony with his own "goodness." Yet mercy strews "his path and his bed." Promise of recovery, sign and marvel—sign of recovery, and recovery itself—are all in early sequel. Mercies of kindness still follow and pursue him (Isa. xxxix. 1)—letters, presents, congratulations, flattering inquiries of the wonderful sign granted to Hezekiah, in a double sense, of Heaven itself—and the issue already declares itself! The net is *not* "spread in vain in the sight of *this* bird"! Sickness, warning, special kindness, special suggestions of dependence, and therefore of the appropriate humility; of dependence most graciously remembered of Heaven, and therefore of gratitude, that should have been responsive;—"all this array one cunning bosom-sin blows quite away." The occasion of sin came through the very warning against sin, and shows how sin *will* carve its own occasion right through *all* occasion!

II. THE SIN ITSELF NOW IN QUESTION. The careful study of this for our own warning is the more desirable, inasmuch as it is the one only recorded defection of Hezekiah. It comes on the page of his history unexpectedly, and must be supposed to come out of one of those most sunken and aside depths that give facility for sin to harbour, and for Satan to work his devices in the more difficult cases for him. The lesson is that with Satan, the expert in the offensive, it needs ever that with much prayer we strive to be experts in the defensive. The pomp of display and the vanity of ostentation by which and into which Hezekiah was now entrapped, were probably attended by aggravating circumstances, which, though not stated, may be surmised with no little probability; but, at any rate, they were penetrated by *this* aggravation—that they came from one who knew better, and had so well known and done better, that they could only be viewed as some *very retrograde* condition of heart, and, unless sternly checked, liable to lead to worse developments in practice. Civil words to Babylon, and civil deeds to the ambassadors of her king, happened to be just the wrong thing, and not the right. A vain-glorious display of the treasures, that already excite the cupidity of plunder—temptations to our tempter and would-be betrayer and destroyer—was a grand mistake indeed. So are civil words to our souls' tempters, and civil deeds to our great enemy Satan! *If* Hezekiah had known that "these men," and "the country whence they came" (2 Kings xx. 14), were going to be the capturers and the enforced home respectively of God's people, whom he had been set jealously to guard and watch over as the under-shepherd; *if* he had known that all his "precious things, silver and gold, spices and ointment, armour and all treasures," were to be the sacrilegious plunder of Babylon and the King of Babylon;—would he then have done as he did? These things, it may truly be said, he did *not* know now. But what *did* he know? And did he not know such things as these—that pride and vanity, vain-glory and ostentation, were not for him, who was the dependent servant of God, and the trustee of treasures, sacred treasures, also, that belonged to him to whom the earth and the fulness thereof and all its precious things, but especially Israel, belonged? How often do we excuse ourselves, both for mere faults and also for sins, on the plea that we did not know certain exact facts, forgetful of these two things—*first*, that we nevertheless *did* know, and do know, certain great general principles and rules which, had we observed them, would have covered and governed all individual cases; and, *secondly*, that though we may often say, "We did not know," there remains to be answered the question whether our ignorance was not nevertheless of our own making, or at least within the reach of our own removing!

III. THE ATTITUDE OF HEZEKIAH TO HIS FAITHFUL PROPHET. It certainly would appear (2 Kings xx. 14, 15; Isa. xxxix. 3, 4) that he was conscious of wrong in the presence of Isaiah, that he feared his interrogatories, that he equivocated in his reply, or, at any rate, concealed, or tried to conceal, some part of what had transpired in his interview with the ambassadors of Babylon, laying emphasis enough on the rest. So far as the narrative goes, he does not directly reply to what "these men" *said*. He was probably flattered by "great Babylon" coming at all, by the congratulations brought, by the inquiry respecting "the wonder that was done in the land," and—infatuation though it were, if so—by the presumable overtures on the part of the King of great Babylon to enter into some alliance with him. This all was emphasized greatly by the fact that the present visit was *the first* converse of the two kingdoms. Israel had heard of Babylon, of her "wealth," her "glory," her "beauty," and of her "sins" (Isa. xiii., xiv., xxi.) also, but up to this time had held no sort of communion with her. In an evil hour the "uplifted" (ver. 25) heart of Hezekiah answered to all the blandishments of the occasion, and the new and grand acquaintance which he has made is prophetically and positively set before him by Isaiah in a light which quickly disenchants him, as the conqueror and taker-captive of Israel, and the very master of his sons and humbled posterity. An hour ago it was his ambition to show all his "wealth" and all his "dominion," and watch whether they vied with those of the great master of the "ambassadors." A moment's vision of the truth dashes all else to the ground; and Hezekiah becomes either the genuine resigned penitent—God having "tried him," left him "to himself, that he might learn all that was in his heart" (ver. 31)—or the alike obsequious and selfish receiver of the tidings of doom for his people, delayed till after his own death. If this latter be the position, the even grateful resignation to the Divine will, uttered by Hezekiah's lip, contrasts ill with the nobility we would wish to put to the credit of such a king, and the king of such a people.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*In face of the enemy.* We do not know how long "after these things, and the establishment thereof," occurred the events which are here narrated; but the connection of the two in the record of the Chronicler may suggest to us—

I. THAT TROUBLE MAY FOLLOW FAITHFULNESS AS IT DOES FOLLOW SIN. We never read of Israel's serious departure from their loyalty to Jehovah without reading of appropriate penalty coming in due course. Suffering *always* waits on sin—suffering in some form. But sometimes, as here, trouble comes to the right-hearted; to the nation which has Hezekiah for its king, and Isaiah for its prophet; to the man who is zealous in the cause of his Divine Lord. "Many are the afflictions [even] of the righteous," and sometimes great as well as many. They have a work to do *within* and *beyond*, the value of which will immeasurably outweigh the "grievousness of the present" (Heb. xii. 11).

II. THAT IT SHOULD BE MET WITH COURAGE, ENERGY, INTELLIGENCE, AND PIETY. These qualities Hezekiah was now showing. He had given way to trepidation, and he had resorted to means which were unworthy of his position and his piety (see 2 Kings xviii. 9—16). But now he was in a nobler mood. His *courage* rose to the occasion (ver. 7); his *energy* was manifested in the effective measures (vers. 4, 5) he took to distress and to disappoint the enemy; his *intelligence* was shown in his taking counsel with the strongest and wisest of his people, in the rapidity of the measures he adopted and in their sagacity, and also in his effort to inspire the people with confidence and security; his *piety* shone forth in his address to the people, calling on them to remember that they had not an "arm of flesh," but "the Lord their God," to lean upon. Let us meet any form of trouble—disappointment, loss, bereavement, sickness, or any affliction whatsoever—in this spirit and with these qualities, and it will not master us; we shall prevail over it. It will not leave desolation and ruin in its track; it will rather leave benefit and blessing behind it.

III. THAT WHEN WE ARE ATTACKED OUR AIM SHOULD BE TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY'S INTENTION. This is not altogether the truism it may seem. Too often men think that their duty and their wisdom under attack is to reply to the enemy in the *same form* in which he is assailing them. But that may be most unwise. Just as Hezekiah considered what Sennacherib was *aiming at*, and took prompt and able measures to defeat that purpose; so we should always consider, not the *kind of warfare*, but the "real objective," the ultimate purpose of our enemy, and should set to work to prevent *its* realization. He may only be wanting to provoke and disturb us, and we shall absolutely defeat his purpose by not allowing ourselves to be provoked or disturbed; he may be desirous of inducing us to take some compromising step, and we shall gain the victory by refusing to be drawn in that direction; he may want to bring himself into notoriety, and we shall defeat him by quietly letting him alone, etc. Consider his aim, and move so as to thwart *that*.

IV. THAT RECTITUDE IS THE STRENGTH OF ANY CAUSE OR KINGDOM. Sennacherib's multitude of soldiery was nothing whatever when he deliberately and ostentatiously arrayed them against the living God. Hezekiah's army was indifferent in size and (probably) in military equipment and training, but what mattered that so long as they had righteousness in their ranks and God for their Leader? We are not, indeed, to despise the means which we employ, but it is so *much* that we may say that it is *everything* to know and feel that our cause is just, that we ourselves are upright in our heart and character, and that, with perfect purity and simplicity of spirit, we can ask God's blessing on our efforts.—C.

Ver. 8.—*Resting upon words.* "And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah." How far are we right and wise in building upon words, upon the words of another?

I. THE FOLLY OF RESTING ON THE USE OF FORMULÆ. There are some sacred forms or phrases, theological or scriptural, which have been much urged upon men, as if they had some very special potency in them; as if we could be perfectly at rest, in regard to human souls, if they did but pronounce those particular phrases with their lips. Such superstition as this is pitiable and perilous. It is utterly without warrant, and it is likely to withdraw the soul from that true trust in which life is to be found. To believe in Jesus Christ can never be resolved into the use of any form of words, however excellent or scriptural such form may be.

II. THE CONFIDENCE WHICH IS FATAL, viz. to rest upon the words of those who are unworthy of our trust. How many of the children of men have lost everything that is most precious because they have made this fatal mistake! Of those whose words should never be built upon are: 1. The *ignorant*, whose range of knowledge is very small, and who have not had the opportunity of learning the ascertainable truth and wisdom of God. 2. The *prejudiced* and obdurate, who will not learn, and therefore do not know and cannot counsel. 3. The *superficial*, who are contented with a knowledge which does not reach "the deep heart of truth." 4. The *false*, who only say what they think is palatable and profitable. 5. The *fickle*, who have one doctrine to-day, but may have a different one to-morrow.

III. THE TRUST WHICH IS SOUND AND WISE. There are words on which we may build. When God speaks to us we know that we may rest on his Word absolutely; we know that we *should* heed his warnings, and that we *may* build on his promises. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," etc. But how shall we know when Christ *is* speaking to us? Many speak in his name who do not speak on his authority. 1. We should pay regard to the words of those who profess to speak for him, and whose character for purity and unselfishness sustains their claim (Matt. vii. 15—20). 2. We should heed the words of those of his disciples who urge that which meets our spiritual necessities and accords with the deepest convictions of our nature. 3. We should consult the Master's own recorded words, always remembering that they are to be interpreted in the spirit, and not in the letter. If we do this we shall not only be "resting on words," we shall be building on the rock, for we shall be abiding in the truth; we shall be grounded on the very wisdom of God itself, or (we may say) on the Wisdom of God *himself* (1 Cor. i. 24, 30).—C.

Vers. 9—23.—*Sennacherib and Hezekiah: abasement and exaltation.* We have here brought out in very vivid contrast—

I. THE HISTORY OF THE HAUGHTY. 1. Appearances are all on *its side.* It has apparently overwhelming numbers, superior military training and equipments, the prestige of previous success and acknowledged worldly power. 2. It is honeycombed with spiritual evil. It is (1) lamentably *ignorant* of the truth which it distorts (ver. 12); (2) *scornful* (ver. 11), indulging in a contemptuous spirit and correspondingly contemptuous language; (3) *pride,* and its accompanying vain-gloriousness (vers. 13—15); (4) *impiety,* speaking of the living God as if he were to be classed with the gods of the heathen (vers. 13, 15). All these evil tempers and baneful utterances are serious sins, either against self or against others, or directly against God. 3. It draws down upon itself the decisive displeasure of the Divine Ruler. For the vauntful Sennacherib, who made so sure of an easy victory and an added honour, there was reserved, in the righteous providence of God, a calamitous disaster (ver. 21; and see 2 Kings xix. 15) and bitter shame. "So he returned with shame of face to his own land" (ver. 21). Thus he that exalted himself was abased; and thus the haughty may expect to be brought low, for there are two powers working against them. (1) The moral condition of haughty-heartedness is one that conducts almost certainly to negligence, to imprudence, to some fatal error of either action or inaction. (2) God's high displeasure is kindled against them. Again and again has he "revealed his wrath" against this evil and baneful passion. To fall under its power is penalty indeed, but it leads on and down to other sorrows.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE HUMBLE. Humility, in the person of the godly Hezekiah, presents an opposite picture to that of his formidable and defiant enemy. 1. It is apparently in great peril. The outward and visible forces—those of this world—are decidedly against it. If the race were always to the swift and the battle to the strong, there would be no chance for humility. It would never clasp the goal, nor win the victory. 2. Its character is one of *beauty* and of *piety.* There is no little moral comeliness in humility; it is "fair to see;" it attracts the gaze of the purest eyes above and below. Moreover, its spirit is reverent; it knows its own helplessness, and it looks upward for the aid it needs; it "cries to Heaven" (ver. 20); it leans on God. 3. Its end is not only deliverance, but honour. The Lord saved Hezekiah from the hand of Sennacherib (ver. 22); and to the King of Judah were brought valuable gifts, and "he was magnified in the sight of all nations" (ver. 23). Concerning humility now, as it may appear in all men's hearts, we may say that (1) it is a fair and beautiful grace in itself, most worth possessing for its own sake, really enriching its subject; (2) it brings with it the favour of God our Father (Isa. lvii. 15; Matt. v. 3; xviii. 4; xxiii. 11; 1 Pet. v. 5, 6); (3) it will be honoured in due time. Not only is it the case that humility introduces us into the kingdom of Christ, but it is also true that it leads us on to an advanced position *in* that kingdom. "The lowly heart that leans on thee" is not only "happy everywhere," but it is spiritually prosperous everywhere; it is certain to receive proofs of Divine regard, probably in human estimation (as with Hezekiah); but, if not thus, in some other way of gracious and gladdening enlargement.—C.

Vers. 24—26, 31.—*The trial of restoration.* The incident to which the text refers was a very small one when measured against the magnitude of that with which the preceding verses deal. It concerns the sickness and the recovery of one man, together with a visit to the court at Jerusalem of a few ambassadors. But it was very much to Hezekiah himself, and it contains valuable lessons for us all.

I. THE INCALCULABLE ELEMENT IN OUR TRIALS. This is large. 1. We cannot guess *when they will come.* What little reason had Hezekiah to anticipate that "sickness unto death"! It sprang upon him unawares. So does our affliction. We are reckoning on prosperity, health, friendship; and, behold! immediately in front of us is trouble, sickness, loneliness. A few hours may make all the difference to us in the colour and complexion of our life. 2. We cannot calculate *how far they will go.* We expect the little ailment to pass away in a day or two, and it becomes a very grave and threatening illness; we think we are stricken with a mortal blow, and we find that we have nothing that need seriously disturb us. And so with other troubles beside bodily disorder. We cannot measure their magnitude or their gravity. 3. We cannot understand *why they have come,* or what they mean. Is it that *we* have sinned? or that others have erred, and we are "carrying their infirmity"? Is it a mark of Divine displeasure? or is it a sign of our Father's interest in us and care for our deeper and truer well-being? 4. We cannot enter, except in a very slight degree, into *the seriousness of others' sorrow.* A very special gift of the grace and power of sympathy will enable some men (and women) to understand and feel much with others; but those who have ordinary human faculties very imperfectly understand what other souls are suffering, how much other hearts are bleeding.

II. OUR REFUGE IN GOD. Hezekiah "prayed unto the Lord." We know, from the account in 2 Kings xx., how the afflicted man "poured out his heart" unto God, and how earnestly he besought the Divine compassion. In the day of our trouble—especially "in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow"—there is nothing we can do that approaches the wisdom or that supplies half the relief of seeking and finding a refuge in God. Even if we do not expectantly ask for deliverance from our adversity, we appeal (and never vainly) for Divine sympathy and succour in it. This, we are sure, can never be denied us. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. ciii. 13). We have in Jesus Christ the "High Priest . . . touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. iv. 15). Our affliction tries us; it proves, not only to God, but to ourselves and to others, what is the spirit we are of; whether ours is, or is not, the spirit of filial trustfulness, of quiet acquiescence, of genuine piety, of openness of heart to *learn*, and of readiness of will to *do*, his holy will. But there is another trial, which perhaps strikes deeper and proves us more thoroughly.

III. THE TRIAL OF RESTORATION. Hezekiah bore well the trial of sickness; it drew, or drove, him to the Rock of his salvation. He did not stand well the trial which came with his restoration. Then came congratulatory embassage, and then the uplifted heart showed itself, and the unbecoming ostentation came forth; and with it came the displeasure of the Lord. The king "rendered not again according to the benefit done;" he did not respond to God's especial grace (ver. 24) with corresponding gratitude, losing sight of self and keeping God's pitiful and powerful intervention in view. His heart was unchastened and "lifted up." How do we bear ourselves when the cloud has departed and the sun shines again? What is our spiritual attitude when we are strong again, or rich again, or again surrounded with friends? *That is the trial-hour.* Then God proves us; then we show to him and to our neighbours what mind we are of—whether our affliction has permanently purified, or only temporarily touched us. Let those who have been cast down to the ground in any kind of affliction, and who have been raised up again by the good hand of their God upon them, ask themselves the main question—Have they proved themselves to be docile children of their heavenly Father, apt disciples of the Lord of their life? Have they learned humility, self-distrust, unworldliness, consecration? Or are they lapsing into that which is selfish, earthly, proud? God has been proving them; let them examine their own hearts. "Let every man prove his own" heart. If he *can*, let him "have rejoicing in himself,' in his spiritual integrity; if he *cannot*, let him consider well and act wisely before God, "lest a worse thing happen unto him."—C.

Vers. 27—30, 32, 33.—*Hezekiah's happiness.* 1. There can be no question at all as to

Hezekiah's *greatness*. He was one of the greatest of the kings of Judah; not more than two, or three at the most, can be named as being greater than he. 2. Or as to the excellency of his estate (see text, vers. 27—29). He had all that his heart could wish, so far as temporal possessions were concerned. 3. Or as to the regard in which he was held by his subjects. They evidently "delighted to honour" him, as they showed by their action when he died (ver. 33). When the restraints of a great man's presence are taken away, we see what his fellows really think, and how they feel about him. But was he a happy man, an enviable man, one with whose condition—"state for state with all attendants"—we should like to exchange our own? That may well be doubted. Consider—

I. THE DEEPENING SHADOW THAT LAY ALONG HIS PATH. He knew that, from the time of his sickness, he had fifteen years to live (2 Kings xx. 6). Now, with such a sensitive and thoughtful spirit as his was (Isa. xxxviii. 2, 3), we may be sure that he counted the years as they went by, and that he realized with painful force the diminution of those that remained to him. How much more happy are we who are in ignorance of the number of the years before us! To know positively that only so many more remain must cast an ever-darkening shadow on the path of life.

II. THE LACK OF THE LIGHT BEYOND THE SHADOW. Hezekiah does not seem to have cherished any hope, to have entertained any expectation that could be truly called a hope, concerning the future (see Isa. xxxviii. 9—20). And to be drawing nearer and nearer, day by day, by a distinctly measurable distance, the hour when the light of life would go out into the thick darkness,—what a saddened life must that have been to a thoughtful and imaginative spirit!

III. THE FEAR HE MUST HAVE FELT CONCERNING HIS COUNTRY'S FUTURE. Manasseh, his son, may have been too young to have given any very decided intimation of his probable future. But, looking behind him, remembering the imperfections or the reactions and apostasies of Solomon, of Jehoram, of Ahaz, he must have been seriously concerned lest his son should undo what he himself had so laboriously done. What security was there that the evil and idolatrous practices he had so fearlessly and so faithfully suppressed would not be revived? that the religion of Jehovah he had so carefully re-established would not be set aside, and thus his life-labour lost? Such reflections—especially if he had any insight into, and therefore any foresight of, Manasseh's character and course—must have tinged his thought with a melancholy hue. Yet was there one compensating and reassuring thought, which may have balanced all others, and have brightened his latter days. That was—

IV. THE REVIEW OF HIS OWN LIFE, and of the work he had wrought since he had occupied the throne. It was not the recollection of his *prosperities* (ver. 30) which would gladden his heart in the after-years; they become of continually smaller consequence as we leave them behind us. It was the remembrance of his *kindnesses* (ver. 32, marginal reading) and of his *faithfulness* as the chief servant of Jehovah, that would give gladness to his heart, as they gave lustre to his reign. Let us remember that physical enjoyments, mental excitements, earthly honours, human congratulations or laudations,—all these *melt* away into nothingness as time comes between them and our spirit. Soon the one vital and only serious question will be—What have we done of all that God gave us to do? what have we achieved with the faculties and the facilities he placed in our charge? Prosperities and enjoyments do for the passing hour, but kindnesses and fidelities attend us to the dying pillow, and they cross the last stream and await us as we land on the other side.—C.

Vers. 1—8.—*An Assyrian invasion of Judah*. I. THE DATE. 1. *Indefinitely*. "After these things, and this faithfulness" (ver. 1); *i.e.* after the great Passover, which terminated in the destruction of the symbols of idolatry throughout the land, with the restoration of the true worship of Jehovah in connection with the reopened and purified temple (ch. xxx., xxxi.), and after the singular display of zeal and piety on the part of Hezekiah in furthering that good work. How long after not stated; the juxtaposition of the Passover and the invasion favours the idea that the former fell not in Hezekiah's first year, but after his sixth (see homily on ch. xxx. 2), since the latter cannot be placed earlier than eight years after the fall of Samaria, B.C. 720. 2. *Definitely*. "In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah" (2 Kings xviii. 13; Isa. xxxvi.

1). If this date be correct, the invasion referred to cannot have been that of Sennacherib (B.C. 701), eighteen or nineteen years after the capture of the northern capital, or in Hezekiah's twenty-fourth year, but must have been an expedition of Sargon, who, ten years earlier (B.C. 711), marched against "the people of Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab," who had formed an alliance with the King of Egypt—a monarch who could not save them; and in particular besieged and took Ashdod (Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' pp. 291, 292). The expedition against Ashdod (Isa. xx. 1) was conducted by Sargon's tartan, or commander-in-chief, "while Sargon himself overran 'the wide-spreading land of Judah,' and captured its capital, Jerusalem." The invasion of Jerusalem is referred to in Isa. x., as Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad, Damascus, and Samaria, were conquests, not of Sennacherib, but of Sargon (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 137); and beyond question this must be the invasion to which 2 Kings (xviii. 13) and Isaiah (xxxvi. 1) allude, if the date given by them be correct. If, however, Sennacherib's invasion is meant, an error must have crept into the text with reference to the date, and "twenty-fourth" will require to be substituted for the "fourteenth." Kleinert, Sayce, and Professor Cheyne ('The Prophecies of Isaiah,' i. 201—210) adopt the former view, that in 2 Kings (xviii. 13), 2 Chronicles (xxxii. 1), and Isaiah (xxxvi. 1) "Sargon" should be read for "Sennacherib"—an opinion with which G. Smith appears to coincide ('Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 293); but Schrader ('Die Keilinschriften,' pp. 309, 310), Robertson Smith ('The Prophets of Israel,' p. 295), Rawlinson ('Kings of Israel and Judah,' p. 187), and Canon Driver ('Isaiah: his Life and Times,' p. 49) regard this view as insufficiently established, and believe the invasion alluded to in all these passages to be that of Sennacherib.

II. THE INVADER. 1. *Sargon* (to adopt the alternative view above referred to). On the monuments, *Surru-kinu*, "Strong is the king," or *Sar-ukin*, "He [God] appointed the king." One of Shalmaneser's generals, probably his tartan, or commander-in-chief, who, on Shalmaneser's death during the siege of Samaria (B.C. 723—720), seized the crown and assumed the name Sargon, "in memory of the famous Babylonian monarch who had reigned so many centuries before" (Sayce). Whether, like Tiglath-Pileser II., he had sprung from the ranks (Sayce), or was of kingly descent, probably proceeding from a collateral branch of the royal family (Schrader), cannot be decided; but he was one of the most brilliant potentates that ever sat on the Assyrian throne. A rough and energetic soldier, he conquered in succession Samaria, Egypt, Ashdod, (Jerusalem?), and Babylon, and destroyed the independence of the Hittites at Carchemish. The town of Khorsabad, Dur-Surrukin, the city of Sargon, opposite Mosul, and ten miles from Nineveh, "in the country which borders the mountains," was founded by him ('Records,' etc., xi. 33). 2. *Sennacherib.* On the monuments, *Sin-ahi-irib*, or *Sin-ahi-ir-ba*, "(The god) Sin multiplies the brothers,"—Sargon's son, who, after his father's assassination, ascended the throne of Assyria on the 12th of Ab (July), B.C. 705. "Brought up in the purple, he displayed none of the rugged virtues of his father. He was weak, boastful, and cruel, and preserved his empire only by the help of the veterans and generals whom Sargon had trained" (Sayce, 'Assyria,' etc., p. 41). This, of course, was not the opinion of Sennacherib, who, in an inscription on one of the gigantic bulls guarding the entrance to his palace, speaks of himself as "Sennacherib, great prince, powerful prince, prince of legions, king of the land of Assyria, king of the four regions, worshipped of the great gods, valiant, the manly, the brave, chief of the kings of disobedient people, subverter of evil designs" ('Records,' etc., vii. 59). Oriental sovereigns generally had not studied Prov. xxvii. 2, and had no notion of underrating their own virtues, or modestly concealing their own merit.

III. THE OBJECT. 1. *Proximate.* To besiege and capture or break down the fenced cities of Judah (ver. 1). According to 2 Kings (xviii. 13) and Isaiah (xxxvi. 1), Sennacherib (or Sargon) was in this successful (cf. Isa. x. 5—10). This, according to the monuments, Sargon did while his tartan was besieging Ashdod, B.C. 711 (Sayce), or in connection with his earlier expedition against Hanno of Gaza and Seveh the Sultan of Egypt in B.C. 720 (Schrader); and Sennacherib in B.C. 701 by besieging, capturing, and plundering forty-six of Hezekiah's cities, "strong fortresses and cities without number" ('Records,' etc., vii. 62). 2. *Ultimate.* To capture Jerusalem, which also, according to the monuments, was taken by Sargon, but not by Sennacherib. The assertion of the Chronicler with reference to the Assyrian king, that "his face was to fight against Jerusalem," was applicable to both sovereigns, though only of Sargon was it true that Jerusalem was taken. Sennacherib besieged Hezekiah, shutting him up "like a caged bird in the midst of the city of his royalty" ('Records,' etc., vii. 62); but Jehovah "put a hook into his nose, and a bridle into his lips," and sent him back the way by which he came, without permitting him to enter the city (Isa. xxxvii. 29—37). If Isa. x. refers to Sargon's invasion (Sayce), it would seem as if the capital had been taken (see vers. 6, 12, 22, 24, 34).

IV. THE RESISTANCE. Hezekiah adopted measures to meet the attack of Sargon, or of Sennacherib, on his capital. 1. *A council of war called.* Attended by his princes and mighty men, *i.e.* his statesmen and the generals of his army (ver. 3), who advised that steps should be taken to protect the metropolis, and lent him their aid for that purpose (ver. 3). Probably they also recommended Hezekiah, besides looking for help to Egypt, to join the league Merodach-Baladan of Babylonia was forming against Sargon; or, if the later date be adopted, to seek the aid of Tirhakah against Sennacherib. 2. *The water supplies outside the city stopped.* (1) The reason—that the Assyrian kings should not find much water (ver. 4). Without water it would be impossible to conduct a protracted siege. (2) The mode—by covering up the fountains outside Jerusalem, and leading their waters by subterranean channels into the city (ver. 3; cf. 2 Kings xx. 20). "The brook that flowed through the midst of the land," *i.e.* the Gihon which flowed through the valley of that name on the west side of Jerusalem, connecting the upper pool of Gihon (Isa. xxii. 11; xxxvi. 2), the present-day *Birket Mamilla*, with the under or lower pool (Isa. xxii. 9), the modern *Birket-es-Sultan*, was likewise dried up by the waters of the two springs being drained off by a conduit, and led into a great cistern within the city walls, called Hezekiah's pool, close by the gate of Gennath" (Weser, in Riehm, art. "Gihon"); or, should the Gihon be sought in the spring *Ain Sitti Marjam*, outside the east wall (Mühlan, in Riehm, art. "Jerusalem;" Conder, 'Handbook,' etc., p. 339), then the reservoir into which the waters were conducted will have been one of the four smaller pools in the neighbourhood of the pool of Siloam, if not that of Siloam itself (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., pp. 97—107). Warren locates the Gihon spring in the Tyropœan valley, and says it has not yet been discovered ('Picturesque Palestine,' i. 113; cf. 'The Recovery of Jerusalem,' p. 237). That similar stratagems were adopted when Sargon's tartan was at Ashdod, and Sargon himself was expected at Jerusalem, may be inferred from the fact that Sargon says of the Ashdodites, "Their cities they prepared to make war . . . against capture they fortified its (capital) . . . around it a ditch they excavated. Twenty cubits (thirty-four feet) in its depth they made it, and they brought the waters of the springs in front of the city" (Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' pp. 290, 291). That corresponding measures were resorted to in the time of Sennacherib, Isaiah (xxii. 9—11) shows. (3) The urgency. So great and obvious that the inhabitants generally assisted in the work (ver. 4). 3. *The city fortifications increased.* (1) Hezekiah built up all the wall that was broken down, *i.e.* wherever he found a breach he repaired, or a weak part he strengthened it. The prudence of this was apparent. The strength of a wall or fortress is not more than that of its weakest part, as the strength of a chain is that of its feeblest link. (2) He raised the existing wall to the height of the towers on it, or increased the height of the towers, or ascended the towers upon the walls to make a survey of the situation, and direct the labours of his masons and engineers. (3) Outside of the existing wall he erected another, which enclosed the lower city, Acra. (4) He repaired the castle-fortress Millo, in the city of David, which had been built by Solomon (1 Kings ix. 24). (5) He provided weapons and shields in abundance, as had been done by his grandfather Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 14), whom in military genius he considerably resembled. An inscription of Sennacherib mentions that Hezekiah "had given commandment to renew the bulwarks of the great gate of his city" (this may suggest that the bulwarks had suffered damage in an earlier siege), and that "workmen, soldiers, and builders for the fortification of Jerusalem his royal city he had collected within it" ('Records,' etc., i. 41). 4. *The city population armed.* All the able-bodied men of the metropolis were enlisted, divided into companies, placed under regular military commanders, and drilled, just as is done by modern peoples when expecting an invasion. 5. *The extemporized army reviewed.* By the king's orders the troops were mustered in the broad place at the east gate of the city (see on ch. xxix. 4). 6. *The soldiers suitably addressed.* He encouraged them in their work of defence, as at the great Passover he had encouraged the Levites in their temple duties (ch. xxx. 32). (1) Spirited exhortations. (*a*) "Be strong." So the Philistine generals charged their troops when fighting against Israel (1 Sam. iv. 9); so David, dying, exhorted Solomon succeeding (1 Kings ii. 2); so Oded counselled Asa returning from war (ch. xv. 7); so Paul recommends Christians for the fight of faith (1 Cor. xvi. 13; Eph. vi. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 1). (*b*) "Be courageous." So Joab had encouraged David's army against the Syrians (2 Sam. x. 12); and Jehoshaphat the Levites and priests in their duties (ch. xix. 11); so Peter advises the followers of Christ (2 Pet. i. 5). (*c*) "Be not afraid or dismayed." So Jahaziel to Jehoshaphat's troops (ch. xx. 15—17); and Isaiah to Ahaz when threatened by Rezin and Pekah (ch. vii. 4); so Christ to his disciples (John vi. 20). (2) Effective arguments. (*a*) General: that a Greater was with them than with the invader (cf. 2 Kings vi. 16; Rom. viii. 31; 1 John iv. 4). (*b*) Particular: that he had only frail human power to lean upon—men and horses without number, but still only "an arm of flesh" (cf. Jer. xvii. 5; Ps. lvi. 5; Isa. xxi. 3); whereas they had Jehovah their God to keep them and fight their battles, as Moses (Exod. xiv. 14), Abijah (ch. xiii. 12), and Jehoshaphat (ch. xx. 17) had; and as Christians may have (Matt. xxviii. 20; Rom. viii. 31). 7. *The confidence of the people raised.* They rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah (ver. 8). In the face of Isaiah's accusation (xxii. 11) this can hardly mean that they placed an unreserved and exclusive trust in Jehovah. The prophet rather charges them with trusting less to him than to their defensive preparations.

LESSONS. 1. The military spirit essentially an aggressive spirit. 2. The best bulwarks of a nation are the pious lives of its people. 3. The necessity of combining faith and works in ordinary matters as well as in things of the spirit. 4. Confidence in God the best protection against fear of man. 5. The certainty that none can be victorious who fight against God, or be defeated for whom God fights.—W.

Vers. 9—16.—*The invasion of Sennacherib: 1. A summons to surrender.* I. SENNACHERIB'S ENCAMPMENT AT LACHISH. Fifteen or eighteen hours west-south-west of Jerusalem, in the low country of Judah, on the confines of Philistia, fourteen miles north-east of Gaza, Lachish (see on ch. xi. 9; xxv. 27)—on the monuments *Lakis*—according to a slab in the British Museum, was a walled town with towers and battlements, whose power of resistance was so great as to demand a protracted siege. 1. *Sennacherib's route thither.* From the north—not by the military road through Nazareth, Jezreel, Sichem, Bethel, Ai, Michmash, Geba, Rama, Gibeah, Anathoth, Nob (Isa. x. 28—32), Sargon's route (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 137), but by Sidon, Akko, Joppa, Bene-berak, Beth-dagon, Ekron, and Ashdod (Schrader, p. 386). 2. *Sennacherib's employment there.* (1) Besieging Lachish. Sennacherib's annals furnish no account of this siege; but some sculptured slabs in the British Museum represent a large city "defended by double walls, with battlements and towers and by fortified outworks," for the capture of which Sennacherib brought up his whole army, "and raised against the fortifications as many as ten banks or mounts, completely built of stones, bricks, earth, and branches of trees" (Layard, 'Nineveh and Babylon,' p. 149). That this was Lachish is rendered probable by the circumstance that one of these slabs depicts the capture of Lachish, the inscription reading, "Sennacherib, the king of multitudes, the King of Assyria, sat on an upright throne, and the spoil of the city of Lachish passed before him" (ibid., p. 150). "The besieged defended themselves with great determination, thronged the battlements and towers, showering arrows, javelins, stones, and blazing torches upon the assailants," while the Assyrians "poured water with large ladles upon the flaming brands which threatened to destroy their engines" (ibid., p. 149). The stubborn resistance of Lachish no doubt delayed the advance of Sennacherib's whole force against Jerusalem ('Records,' etc., i. 35). (2) Receiving Hezekiah's submission. Hezekiah had rebelled against the Assyrian supremacy in the days of Shalmaneser (2 Kings xviii. 7), but had again been placed under it by Sargon. On Sargon's assassination (B.C. 705) the kings of Sidon, Ascalon, and Judah formed an alliance with Egypt and Ethiopia to once more break the oppressive yoke of Assyria. The league was joined by the Ekronites, against the will of

Padi their prince, who remained faithful to Assyria, and whom they "placed in chains of iron, and unto Hezekiah King of Judah delivered," who "shut him up in darkness (or prison)." Before the allies could unite their forces, Sennacherib appeared upon the scene, having obtained a hint of the confederacy being formed against him. First he swooped down upon Luliah the King of Sidon, who fled to a distant spot in the middle of the sea, leaving to the mercy of the conqueror "his strong cities and castles, walled and fenced, and his finest garrison towns." Next the kings of Samaria, Sidon, Arvad, Gubal, Ashdod, Beth-Ammon, Moab, and Edom, hastened to meet the invader with "great presents," and kiss his feet. Zedek of Ascalon, who, along with Judah, still stood out, was, with his wife, sons, daughters, brothers, and gods, apprehended and deported to Assyria. At Lachish a halt was made to await the Ethiopian and Assyrian kings, who were soon after defeated at Altaku, the Eltekon of Josh. xv. 59. Dreading the fate he saw approaching, Hezekiah despatched an embassy to Lachish, proffering submission, and agreeing to pay whatever tribute might be asked (2 Kings xviii. 14). Sennacherib demanded three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. The monuments give the tribute as eight hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold, and state that it was sent to Nineveh after Sennacherib, with "woven cloth, scarlet, embroidered; precious stones of large size, couches of ivory, movable thrones of ivory, skins, and *teeth* of *buffaloes*—all sorts of treasures, his (Hezekiah's) daughters, the male and female inmates of his palace, as also male and female slaves." The discrepancy as to the number of silver talents may be explained by supposing different standards of value to have been employed in reckoning, while the biblical account of the place to which the tribute was sent is clearly to be preferred. In order to pay the exaction Hezekiah appropriated all the silver in the temple, and the treasures in the palace, as well as stripped the gold from off the doors and pillars of the former (2 Kings xviii. 15, 16). ('Records,' etc., i. 33, etc.; Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 295, etc.; Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 291, etc.; Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 139, etc.)

II. SENNACHERIB'S COMMISSION TO HIS GENERALS. These generals were three in number. 1. *Their titles.* (1) Tartan. In Assyria, *tur-ta-nu*, commander-in-chief, or field-marshal (2 Kings xviii. 17; Isa. xx. 1). (2) Rabsaris, "chief of the eunuchs" (2 Kings xviii. 17), probably Sennacherib's lord chamberlain, whose duty was to act as official scribe. (3) Rabshakeh, "chief of the cup-bearers" (2 Kings xviii. 17; Isa. xxxvi. 2). As the inscriptions never speak of this court official as a military personage, it has been suggested (Schrader, p. 319) that Rabshakeh is a Hebraized or Aramaized form of *Rabsak*, meaning "upper chief," "superior officer," perhaps Sennacherib's prime minister. Tiglath-Pileser II. had a general of this name, whom he sent to Tyre (Smith's 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 264). The Rabshakeh was obviously the orator of Sennacherib's three (2 Kings xviii. 19). The tartan was most likely too exalted a personage to hold either oral or written communications with the king's enemies. 2. *Their commission.* To advance, with a detachment of the army, against Jerusalem, with the view of intimidating it into surrender; failing in this, to prosecute against it a siege. Sennacherib was most likely moved to this by the report of the approach of the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia; before encountering these, it was clearly to his advantage to reduce both Ekron and Jerusalem.

III. SENNACHERIB'S ADDRESS TO THE KING AND INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM. Not delivered in person, but through "his servants" (ver. 9), and in particular Rabshakeh (2 Kings xviii. 19; Isa. xxxvi. 2—4). Nor spoken directly to Hezekiah and his people, but to Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, who was over the household, *i.e.* the king's high steward (Isa. xxii. 20), to Shebna the scribe, or king's secretary, who had lately been deposed from the office of high steward (Isa. xxii. 15—19) because of favouring the interest of Assyria, and to Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder, or king's annalist. Standing by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field, where Isaiah and his son Shear-jashub had met with Ahaz when the Syro-Israelitish invasion was threatened (Isa. vii. 3), and where the Assyrian army was now encamped, over against the Gennath Gate, in front of which the envoys of Hezekiah stood, while the inhabitants crowded round it and even sat upon the city wall, observing the scene (Isa. xxii. 1—13),—Rabshakeh, in the name of his master, called upon the king and his subjects to surrender, using the Hebrew tongue, that the inhabitants might understand, and becoming alarmed, induce their rulers to submit. The points in Rabshakeh's harangue, considerably shortened by the Chronicler, were two. 1. *That the hope of deliverance held out by Hezekiah was a delusion.* If their confidence was based upon expected assistance from Egypt, they would soon know that Pharaoh was "a bruised reed, upon which, if a man leant, it would go into his hand and pierce it" (2 Kings xviii. 21); if it was Jehovah to whom Hezekiah was persuading them to turn their gaze (ver. 11; cf. 2 Kings xviii. 22; Isa. xxxvi. 7), that source of succour would prove as little satisfactory. (1) Because it was not likely Jehovah would extend aid to one who had so openly insulted him as Hezekiah had done by taking away his high places and altars, and commanding all Jerusalem and Judah to worship at one altar (ver. 12). Either the fame of Hezekiah's reformation had travelled to Nineveh, or Sennacherib had heard of it since coming into the country, if he had not learnt of it from Sargon his father. But Sennacherib either wilfully, or most likely ignorantly, misrepresented Hezekiah's action as one that would rather cause him to forfeit than gain the Divine favour. So the best deeds of men are often misunderstood, and their good conversation falsely accused by others who speak against them as evil-doers (1 Pet. ii. 12; iii. 16). (2) Because, even although Jehovah did extend aid to Hezekiah, it would come to nothing. Jehovah would prove as powerless as the gods of other nations had done. Not one of these had been able to oppose the resistless march of Sennacherib and his predecessors on the Assyrian throne, or to deliver from destruction the peoples that served them; and if these had failed to render effectual aid to their devotees, much more would Jehovah fail in protecting his (vers. 13—15; cf. 2 Kings xviii. 33—35; Isa. xxxvi. 11—13). Sennacherib forgot, as Sargon had done before him, that the power of himself and his fathers over the nations and their gods arose from this—that Assyria was the rod of Jehovah's anger (Isa. x. 5—19), and that whensoever Jehovah pleased he could cause the Assyrian, who smote with a rod, to be beaten down (Isa. xxx. 31). 2. *That their resistance would entail upon them all the horrors of a siege.* They would certainly perish by famine and by thirst (ver. 11), if not by the sword, since their escape was impossible. Neither Sennacherib nor his generals guessed the resources of the God of Judah; had they done so, their attitude would have been less defiant and their language less confident. Events were to teach them that what was impossible for man was both possible and easy for God.

Learn: 1. The presumption of some wicked men. 2. The impotence of all heathen gods. 3. The supremacy of the one living and true God. 4. The security of those whom Jehovah defends.—W.

Vers. 16—23.—*The invasion of Sennacherib: 2. The great deliverance.* I. SENNACHERIB AND HIS GENERALS. Their renewed efforts to take the city. 1. *The letter of Sennacherib to Hezekiah.* (Ver. 17.) The tartan with his assistants having failed to either storm Jerusalem or intimidate its inhabitants, returned, or more probably despatched, Rabshakeh to his master for further instructions. Sennacherib was now at Libnah, a few miles nearer Jerusalem than Lachish, which in the interval had capitulated. Learning that the King of Egypt was on the way north to give him battle, he sent back Rabshakeh, accompanied by special messengers, bearing a letter to Hezekiah to expedite the taking of the city. The letter when received was read by Hezekiah with indignation and alarm. It contained a repetition with emphasis of what had been uttered by Rabshakeh in the hearing of the king's envoys and of the inhabitants of the city. Of course, the mere reassertion of Rabshakeh's boastings, though in the form of a letter from Sennacherib himself, did not make them the less false, insolent, or blasphemous. 2. *The railings of Sennacherib's generals.* As before by Rabshakeh, so a second time by the generals and perhaps also the messengers (ver. 18). To the people on the town wall in their own tongue were addressed words meant to terrify and persuade to capitulation—loud, boastful, arrogant, blasphemous reproaches against Jehovah, putting him on a level with idols, the works of men's hands, and declaring him to be as powerless as these (ver. 19), little dreaming they were so soon and so completely to be undeceived (ver. 21). So men often hug to their bosoms the false ideas they have formed of the Christian's God, without thinking that in a moment, by being admitted through death's portal into his presence, they may be proved to have been deceived.

II. **Hezekiah and his prophet.** Their supplications to the God of heaven (ver. 20). 1. *The prayer of Hezekiah.* Recorded in 2 Kings xix. 14—19 and Isa. xxxvii. 15—19. (1) Where offered. "In the house of the Lord." Having read the Assyrian's letter, Hezekiah repaired to the temple and spread it before the Lord; in which act lay a double propriety—Jehovah having invited his people to call upon him in the day of trouble (Ps. l. 15), and promised to deliver them (Ps. xci. 15); and Jehovah being the One most insulted by Sennacherib's reproaches. (2) To whom addressed. To Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, whose presence was with his people, who alone governed the nations, and was supreme Creator of heaven and earth (cf. Jehoshaphat's prayer, ch. xx. 6—12). (3) In what terms couched. Earnest, reverential, direct, and hopeful. Requesting a favourable audience for his intercession, he first called God to see and hear the reproaches of Sennacherib, next acknowledged the truth of Sennacherib's language concerning the gods of the nations he destroyed, and finally besought God to show that he alone was God, by saving them out of the King of Assyria's hand. (4) With what result followed. It was answered by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who, speaking in God's name, assured him that "Sennacherib should not come into the city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it, but should return by the way that he came, and should not come into the city" (2 Kings xix. 32, 33; Isa. xxxvii. 33, 34). 2. *The prayer of Isaiah.* Though not recorded by the writer of 2 Kings that Isaiah prayed along with or in addition to Hezekiah, the fact mentioned that, on Rabshakeh's first approach, Hezekiah requested Isaiah to "lift up his prayer" on their behalf (2 Kings xix. 4), renders it probable that on this occasion also he joined the king in crying unto Heaven.

III. **Jehovah and his angel.** Their interposition on behalf of Judah and Jerusalem (vers. 21, 22). 1. *The destruction of Sennacherib's army.* (1) Where? "In the camp of the King of Assyria;" most probably in that of the tartan lying before Jerusalem (Delitzsch), though it may have been in that of Sennacherib's army. According to Herodotus (ii. 141), the disaster occurred at Pelusium, whither Sennacherib, "King of the Arabians and Assyrians," had marched with a great host on his way to Egypt. If so (Ewald, Cheyne, and others), then Sennacherib must have broken up his camp at Libnah, and moved south to intercept Tirhakah (cf. Driver, 'Isaiah: his Life and Times,' pp. 81, 82). (2) When? "That night" (2 Kings xix. 35); but whether the night after Hezekiah's prayer (Rawlinson, Bähr) is uncertain. Hardly, if Pelusium was the scene of the overthrow; possibly, if the Assyrian camp still remained at Libnah (Keil). That the night was that in which Sennacherib, in the following year, sat down to besiege Jerusalem with his own army (Keil, Delitzsch) does not seem likely. (3) How? By an angel—the angel of the Lord (2 Kings xix. 35; Isa. xxxvii. 36). Whether the blow was supernatural or natural cannot be determined from the language of Scripture. The destruction of the firstborn of Egypt (Exod. xii. 29) and the diminution of David's army (2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16) were both accomplished by the angel of the Lord; yet the former only appear to have been suddenly smitten, while the latter were cut off by pestilence. Herodotus's notion, that the bow-strings, and shield-straps of Sennacherib's soldiers were gnawed through during the night by innumerable field-mice, favours the pestilence-theory—among the Egyptians the mouse having been the hieroglyph of devastation by pestilence (J. D. Michaelis). (4) To what extent? To the cutting off of "all the mighty men of valour," with "the leaders and the captains" (ver. 21); in all, 185,000 (2 Kings xix. 35; Isa. xxxvii. 36). (5) With what effect? The return of Sennacherib to Assyria with shame of face, because of having failed to effect the object of his expedition. Whether the fleeing Assyrians were pursued by the liberated Judahites (Ewald) is not stated by the Chronicler, and is only a doubtful inference from Ps. xlvi. 7, 8; lxxvi. 3, 5. That the Assyrian monuments have preserved no record of Sennacherib's humiliation is not surprising. The Egyptian monuments of the nineteenth dynasty contain no memorial of Menephtah's overthrow in the Red Sea. Nations, like individuals, do not publish their misfortunes, least of all perpetuate the remembrance of their defeats. 2. *The assassination of Sennacherib himself.* The usual end of kings in Assyria (Sargon, and probably Shalmaneser II. and Assur-nirari), no less than in Israel and Judah. "Within the hollow crown that rounds the mortal temples of a king keeps death his court," etc.

('Richard II.,' act iii. sc. 2). (1) Where Sennacherib was murdered. "In his own land," in "the house of his god" (ver. 21); *i.e.* in Nineveh, in the house of Nisroch his god (2 Kings xix. 37; Isa. xxxvi. 37)—a divinity not yet identified in the Assyrian pantheon. (2) When? Not immediately on returning to Nineveh, since, according to the inscriptions, he lived twenty years after the Egyptian and Jewish expedition, and undertook five more campaigns in other parts of his empire. (3) By whom? "They that came forth of his own bowels"—"Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons" (2 Kings xix. 37; Isa. xxxvi. 38); the former in Assyrian *Adar-malik*, "Adar is prince," also the name of an Assyrian god (2 Kings xvii. 31); and the latter in Assyrian *Sar-usur*, a shortened form of an Assyrian word, of which the first part was probably *Assur*, *Bil*, or *Nergal*, meaning "Assur (Bel or Nergal) protect the king" (Schrader, p. 329). Nergal-sarezer occurs as a proper name in Jeremiah (xxxix. 3, 13). This may have been the full designation of Sennacherib's son (Alexander on 'Isaiah,' ii. 74; Cheyne, 'The Prophecies of Isaiah,' i. 225).

IV. THE PEOPLES AND THEIR PRESENTS. The effect produced by this deliverance on surrounding nations. 1. *Gifts unto Jehovah.* Brought not by Judahites alone, but by the inhabitants of nations who had been delivered from the Assyrians' yoke, and were designed as a grateful recognition of Jehovah's hand in effecting their emancipation. No benefactor more deserving of man's thanks than God (Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18); no duty more frequently urged upon men than gratitude to the Supreme Giver (Ps. l. 14; c. 4; cvii. 1; Eph. v. 20; Phil. iv. 6; Col. i. 12; 1 Thess. v. 18); yet no bestower of good receives less thanks than he. 2. *Precious things to Hezekiah.* As the Philistines and Arabians had brought presents to Jehoshaphat (ch. xvii. 10), so now the inhabitants of heathen countries, among whom may have been the Babylonians—though ver. 31; 2 Kings xx. 12; and Isa. xxxix. 1 refer not to this (see below)—sent gifts to Hezekiah in recognition of his greatness, as attested by the Divine deliverance wrought on his behalf.

Learn: 1. The heinousness of scoffing at religion. 2. The impotence of human rage against God (Ps. ii. 1—5). 3. The superiority of the true God over all divinities worshipped by the heathen (Ps. cxv. 3, 4). 4. The efficacy of prayer (Jas. v. 16). 5. The advantage of social supplication (Matt. xviii. 19). 6. The command of God over the resources of nature (Numb. xi. 23). 7. The ability of God to save his people out of any sort of peril (1 Cor. x. 13). 8. The sad fate of the ungodly (Ps. lxxv. 8, 10). 9. The indebtedness of the world to the Church's God.—W.

Ver. 24.—*Hezekiah's sickness and prayer.* I. HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS. 1. *The time of it.* "In those days" (ver. 24; 2 Kings xx. 1; Isa. xxxviii. 1)—an indefinite expression, differently understood. (1) In the days of Sennacherib's invasion, either at its beginning (Keil), during its continuance (Thenius), or after its close (Ewald); but as, according to the monuments, this occurred B.C. 701, or in Hezekiah's twenty-fourth year, either Hezekiah lived more than twenty-nine years in all, or his sickness must be placed earlier. (2) In the days of Sargon's invasion in B.C. 711, and therefore in Hezekiah's fourteenth year (see preceding homilies). 2. *The nature of it.* A boil (2 Kings xx. 7; Isa. xxxviii. 21); but whether an ordinary abscess or a carbuncle cannot be determined, though there is no ground for connecting it with the pestilence that cut off Sennacherib's army. It probably arose out of the bodily weakness induced by long labours in reforming religion, and heavy anxieties in meeting and resisting the Assyrian invasion. 3. *The severity of it.* "Even unto death." It had all the appearance of being fatal. Hezekiah himself expected nothing else than that "in the noontide of his days he should depart unto the gates of Sheol, and be deprived of the residue of his years" (Isa. xxxviii. 10). Even had his malady not suggested this to his mind, Jehovah's message to him by Isaiah (xxxviii. 1) would have done so. All sickness a prelude to, and premonition of, the last.

II. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER. 1. *To whom directed.* The Lord; the only living and true God, as well as the only Hearer of prayer (Ps. lxv. 2). Doubtless Hezekiah also recognized Jehovah's hand in his affliction, and understood that he alone could remove the malady by whose permission it had come. Asa, in his disease, sought not to Jehovah, but to the physicians (ch. xvi. 12); and the result with him was different. 2. *By what supported.* (1) Bitter grief. "Hezekiah wept sore" (2 Kings xx. 3).

Like Antigone (line 198, etc.), he lamented his sad fate, not merely because he was to die, but because he was being cut off in the middle of his days, and when as yet he had no heir (cf. Gen. xv. 2). (2) Strong arguments. He had walked before Jehovah in truth and with a perfect heart, and had done what was good in his sight; and was thus in a manner entitled to the blessing of long life (Deut. xxv. 15; Ps. xxxiv. 12). 3. *In what ended.* Jehovah spake unto him, granting his request, adding fifteen years to his life, and gave him a sign. The cure was effected by Isaiah laying a cake of figs upon the boil—the *vis medicatrix*, however, proceeding not from the fruit, but from him who had said, "Behold, I will heal thee." Jehovah-rophi (Exod. xv. 26) one of Jehovah's names. The sign granted at Hezekiah's request was the turning back of the shadow upon the sun-dial, or step-clock, of Ahaz (2 Kings xx. 11; Isa. xxxviii. 8). This sun-dial, or step-clock, was probably "an obelisk upon a square or circular elevation ascended by steps, which threw the shadow of its highest point at noon upon the highest steps, and in the morning and evening upon the lowest, either on the one side or the other, so that the obelisk itself served as a gnomon." How the shadow was turned back is best explained by "the assumption of a miraculous refraction of the sun's rays, effected by God at the entreaty of the prophet" (Keil on 2 Kings xx. 11; cf. Delitzsch on Isa. xxxviii. 8), though it has been well said, "refraction to the extent required would be very strange and abnormal" (Rawlinson, 'Kings of Israel and Judah,' p. 199).

LESSONS. 1. The liability of all to affliction. 2. The certainty of death. 3. The contingency of many of the Divine decrees. 4. The efficacy of prayer. 5. The weakness of faith in some good men—Hezekiah needed a sign. 6. The condescension of God—in stooping to regard faith's infirmity. 7. The Divine control over nature's resources.—W.

Vers. 25, 26.—*Hezekiah's fall and repentance.* I. HEZEKIAH'S SIN. 1. *Its character.* (1) Ingratitude. "He rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him." That benefit had been great—deliverance from a more powerful assailant than the King of Assyria, even from the king of terrors (Job xviii. 14)—and ought to have awakened undying thankfulness in Hezekiah's bosom, as, indeed, he promised it would (Isa. xxxviii. 20). But it did not. Ingratitude, a sin of which Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 16) and Rehoboam (ch. xii. 1) before him had been guilty, with which men in general are often chargeable (Luke xvii. 17; Rom. i. 21; 2 Tim. iii. 2), and into which the best of men occasionally fall (2 Sam. xii. 7, 8, 9). (2) Pride. "His heart was lifted up." Like other good men before and since, his vows upon his sick-bed were better than his performances when health was restored. He had engaged "to go softly all his years, because of the bitterness of his soul" (Isa. xxxviii. 15); but instead, his heart was lifted up, not as Jehoshaphat's had been, "in the ways of the Lord" (ch. xvii. 6), but as Uzziah's (ch. xxvi. 16) and Amaziah's (ch. xxv. 19) had been, in self-sufficiency—the allusion being to his behaviour in connection with the Babylonian envoys, who shortly after his recovery visited Jerusalem, and endeavoured to enlist him in a league against Assyria (see homily on ver. 31). 2. *Its punishment.* The wrath of Jehovah was threatened (1) upon himself, the immediate offender, which was righteous (ch. xix. 2; xxiv. 18; cf. Rom. i. 18); and (2) upon Judah and Jerusalem, by the law of imputation, and in accordance with the solidarity of nations. The punishment of sin often falls on the innocent, because of their connection with the guilty. Children suffer for the evil-doing of their parents, and subjects for that of their rulers. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. xxxi. 29; Ezek. xviii. 2).

II. HEZEKIAH'S REPENTANCE. 1. *The self-abasement of the king.* "He humbled himself for the pride of his heart." The wrath of Jehovah, pronounced against him and his people by Isaiah, was the Babylonish captivity. When Hezekiah heard the prophet's threatening, he realized that he had sinned, and humbled himself before Jehovah, saying, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken" (2 Kings xx. 14—19; Isa. xxxviii. 3—8). 2. *The concurrence of the people.* "He and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Probably they had not been unfavourable to a Babylonian alliance against Assyria, and were really "art and part" co-criminals with Hezekiah; if they had no share in Hezekiah's action, they had still cause to humble themselves before God on account of Hezekiah their king. 3. *The clemency of Jehovah.* The judgment was to fall on Hezekiah's sons rather than on himself, which Hezekiah recognized as a mercy, and acknowledged by adding, "Is it not so [*i.e.* good] if peace and truth shall be in my days?"

Lessons. 1. The possibility of spiritual declension. 2. The duty of repentance. 3. The obligation of gratitude. 4. The sin of pride.—W.

Vers. 27—30.—*The greatness of Hezekiah.* I. His wealth. 1. *Large.* "Much riches" (ver. 27); "very much substance" (ver. 29). In this he resembled Solomon (ch. ix. 22) and Jehoshaphat (ch. xvii. 5). 2. *Varied.* (1) Precious metals. "Gold, silver, precious stones." (2) Flocks and herds. "All manner of beasts and flocks" (ver. 28). Cf. the wealth of Abraham (Gen. xiii. 2) and Lot (Gen. xiii. 5). (3) Miscellaneous articles. Spices, shields, goodly vessels. (4) Field produce. Corn and wine and oil (ver. 28).

II. His works. 1. *Treasuries.* For his gold, silver, precious stones; for spices, shields, and goodly vessels. 2. *Storehouses.* For his corn, wine, and oil. 3. *Stalls.* For his beasts and herds. 4. *Folds.* For his flocks. 5. *Cities*—i.e. either watchtowers for his shepherds (ch. xxvi. 10) or dwelling-places for his herds and beasts. 6. *Reservoirs.* Containing water for the use of the inhabitants, especially in the time of a siege (ver. 30).

III. His honour. 1. *In life.* (1) By Jehovah, who had exalted and prospered him in all his undertakings, public and private, military and commercial (ver. 30). (2) By his subjects, who trusted, obeyed, revered, and loved him. (3) By foreign princes and peoples, who brought presents to him in Jerusalem (ver. 23). 2. *At death.* (1) By his people—all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem—who buried him in the chiefest, or in the ascent, of the sepulchres of the sons of David; *i.e.* in a special grave prepared for him and succeeding kings, and did him honour, most likely by burning spices (ch. xvi. 14; xxi. 19). (2) By God, who gave him a son to reign in his stead. His throne passed not to a stranger, but continued in the line of David's house, according to the promise. 3. *After death.* By receiving a double, yea, a threefold memorial: (1) in the vision of Isaiah the prophet; (2) in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel; and (3) in the chronicles of the kings of Judah.

Lessons. 1. The best wealth—grace. 2. The noblest deeds—works of faith. 3. The highest honour—salvation and glory.—W.

Ver. 31.—*Hezekiah's mistake.* I. Its occasion. "In connection with the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon." 1. *The senders of this embassy.* "The princes of Babylon;" more particularly Berodach-Baladan, the son of Baladan, King of Babylon (2 Kings xx. 12); or Merodach-Baladan (Isa. xxxix. 1)—undoubtedly the correct form, "Merodach has given a son." Three bearers of this name in the cuneiform inscriptions. The first, a king of South Chaldea and son of Jakin, with whom Tiglath-Pileser II. had warlike dealings (G. Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 256); the second, also a son of Jakin and King of the Chaldeans, whom Sargon defeated, dethroning him and burning his city of Dur-jakin, B.C. 710–9 ('Records,' etc., vii. 46—49); and the third, a King of Babylonia, whom Sennacherib overthrew in the vicinity of Kish ('Records,' etc., i. 25; G. Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 297). The Merodach-Baladan who sent ambassadors to Hezekiah was not the first, unless all three were the same person, but the son and successor of the first (Schrader). The sole question is whether the second and the third were the same, and, if not, which of them it was that despatched envoys to Hezekiah. Schrader distinguishes the two because the Bible describes Hezekiah's Merodach-Baladan as the son of Baladan; while the monuments designate Sargon's as the son of Jakin ('Die Keilinschriften,' p. 342); but Sayce ('Fresh Light,' p. 135) identifies the two, and explains "the son of Baladan" (2 Kings xx. 12; Isa. xxxix. 1) as due to the error of a copyist, like "Berodach" for "Merodach." An absolute decision is meanwhile impossible. 2. *The date of the embassy.* (1) The sacred narrative appears to connect it with Hezekiah's sickness, and this again with Sennacherib's invasion (Ewald, Schrader, Delitzsch). But if Hezekiah's sickness occurred after the invasion, the arrival of the ambassadors must have taken place before it, as otherwise he could not have shown them the treasures of the palace which, prior to their coming, had been despoiled to appease Sennacherib. (2) Hence the opinion has gained ground that, as Hezekiah's sickness must have occurred about the time of Sargon's invasion of Judæa, the mission of Merodach-Baladan must be placed in connection with that event, and that both the sickness and the mission should be dated about B.C. 712–10 (Sayce, Cheyne, Driver). 3. *The pretext of this embassy.* (1) Friendship. To congratulate Hezekiah upon his recovery from what had seemed a fatal malady (2 Kings xx. 12). A proper thing for friends and acquaintances, especially if Christian, to do—to congratulate each other on restored health, provided always such congratulations be sincere, not like those of Joab to Amasa (2 Sam. xx. 9), but like those the patriarch of Uz received from his friends (Job xlii. 11). (2) Scientific research. To inquire of Hezekiah concerning the wonder that was done in the land (ch. xxxii. 31). According to the view taken of the date of this embassy, the wonder referred to will be the destruction of Sennacherib's army, or, what is more probable, the miraculous phenomenon connected with the step-clock of Ahaz (Delitzsch, Keil, Stanley). There is, however, no ground for thinking that either of these formed the real reason. 4. *The object of this embassy.* Political. Perhaps (1) with an eye to future expeditions, "to investigate a little more closely the condition of the forces of Judah" (Ewald); but also (2) with a view to present needs, to concert measures against the King of Assyria by forming a league between Babylon and the Palestinian states (Sayce, Rawlinson).

II. ITS NATURE. The discovery to Sargon's (or Sennacherib's) envoys of all the treasures in his palace and in his kingdom (2 Kings xx. 13; Isa. xxxix. 21). A twofold indiscretion. 1. *A political blunder.* So Isaiah warned Hezekiah. The days would come when these very treasures which Hezekiah had so good-naturedly exhibited to the ambassadors of the Babylonian king, or others in their room, would be carried into Babylon (Isa. xxxix. 3—8). The prophet saw that "from Babylon especially Judah had nothing good to hope for, inasmuch as that state, though often in dispute with Nineveh, was yet by its peculiar position too closely entwined with Assyria; and it was really only a question whether Nineveh or Babylon should be the seat of universal dominion. . . . Accordingly, it flashed like lightning across Isaiah's mind that Babylon, attracted by those very treasures which Hezekiah, not without a certain complacency, had displayed to the ambassadors, might in the future become dangerous to that same kingdom of Judah it was now flattering" (Ewald, 'The History of Israel,' iv. 188). "Even political sharp-sightedness might have foreseen that some such disastrous consequences would follow Hezekiah's imprudent course" (Delitzsch on 'Isaiah,' ii. 126). 2. *A personal transgression.* That Hezekiah's indiscreet conduct was the outcome of mingled motives is hardly doubtful. Amongst these were (1) vanity, or a feeling of inward complacency—in fact, he felt flattered by the attentions of a great Oriental prince like Merodach-Baladan; (2) pride, or a sense of his own importance, arising from the fact that his military resources—his wealth, weapons, and war-chariots—were so abundant; and (3) self-sufficiency, which made him set a higher value on himself than on Jehovah as an Ally.

III. ITS CAUSE. "Jehovah left Hezekiah to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." 1. *The fact stated.* "Jehovah left Hezekiah." (1) He did not warn Hezekiah by sending Isaiah to him before the Babylonian ambassadors had arrived at Jerusalem, or before the evil had been done. God is under no obligation to his intelligent creatures, or even regenerate children, to adopt special means to warn them of approaching danger in the shape of temptation, seeing that the faculties they possess, aided by the light of natural and revealed truth, should suffice to apprize them of the imminence of peril. (2) He did not supernaturally enlighten Hezekiah, either as to the secret designs of the ambassadors or as to the disastrous consequences that should in after-years result from the false step he was about to take. The former Hezekiah should have suspected—*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*; knowledge of the latter was not requisite for determining the course of action which duty prescribed. (3) He did not exceptionally reinforce Hezekiah in the moment of trial, so as to prevent him from falling. Had Hezekiah sought grace, he would have got it; Jehovah was under no obligation to extend it unasked. 2. *The reason given.* "That he might know all that was in his [Hezekiah's] heart." The heart the proper seat of religion (Deut. xxx. 6; 1 Kings viii. 58; Jer. xxxii. 39; Ezek. xi. 19). The character of the heart in every instance known to God (ch. vi. 30; 1 Kings viii. 39; Ps. vii. 9; cxxxix. 1—4; Jer. xvii. 10; Luke xvi. 15). Yet this character not always visible to others or even to one's self (Jer. xvii. 9). Hence God is wont, when his wisdom deems it necessary, to withhold reinforcements of grace from the individual, that this discovery—the unsuspected character of the heart—may be thereby brought to the light. So Christ dealt with Peter (Luke xxii. 31, 32).

Lessons. 1. The danger of flattery. 2. The sin of ostentation. 3. The feebleness of good men when left by God. 4. The necessity of having the heart right in religion. 5. The certainty that God tries all.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The first twenty verses of this chapter are taken up with the account of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah and Hephzibah, who, beginning to reign at the early age of twelve years, reigned in all fifty-five years; the remaining five verses with the account of the reign of his son Amon. The parallel to this chapter is 2 Kings xxi. The repeated references in this chapter to Manasseh's neglect, and to his people's neglect, after his example, of injunction, promise, and threat of the Word of the Lord and of the Law, make it a prominent instance of the spirit of the compiler, and an indication of one of the main objects he had in view, and kept in view in writing these chronicles.

Ver. 1.—The parallel adds the name of Manasseh's mother, the well-omened name Hephzibah, "My delight is in her" (Isa. lxii. 4).

Ver. 2.—**The abominations of the heathen** (see Deut. xviii. 9—14).

Ver. 3.—**He built again**; literally, *returned and built*—the ordinary Hebrew idiom for "took again to building," etc. **Made groves**; *i.e.* as often before the stocks that set forth *Ashtoreth* (Deut. xvi. 21). The parallel gives prominence to the *one* Asherah, ten times offensive, as set up in the house of the Lord (ver. 7 there). The mention of his pantheon of the host of heaven is an addition to the wickedness of former wicked kings. It is also noted in the parallel.

Ver. 4.—**In Jerusalem** (so ch. vi. 6; vii. 16). The quotation is from Deut. xii. 11.

Ver. 6.—**Caused his children.** Parallel (2 Kings xxi. 6), "his *son*," in the singular number (see also 2 Kings xvi. 3 compared with our ch. xxviii. 3). There can be no doubt that this worst of cruel abominations, learned from Ammon and Moab, amounted to nothing less than the sacrifice of the child in the fire. It is, perhaps, something remarkable that we do not encounter anywhere any description of the exact manner of administration of this cruelty, and of its taking effect on the pitiable victim. The solemn commands of Lev. xviii. 21 and Deut. xviii. 10 bespeak sufficiently distinctly the prevision and earnest precaution of the Divine Ruler of Israel, through Moses, on behalf of his people. The following references all bear on the subject, and will be studied with advantage in order given: 2 Kings iii. 27; xvii. 17; Ezek. xx. 26; Micah vi. 7; Amos v. 26; Jer. vii. 32; xix. 4; Ezek. xvi. 20; xx. 26. **In the valley of the son of Hinnom** (Josh. xv. 8; xviii. 16). On an elevation at the eastern extremity of this valley it was that Solomon erected "high places" to Moloch, entailing on himself a long and dire responsibility (1 Kings xi. 7). Consult also our ch. xxviii. 3 and note there; with added reference, Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 172, 482. **Also he observed times**; Revised Version, *and he practised augury.* The Hebrew word is וְעוֹנֵן. This root is found once in piel infinitive (Gen. ix. 14), and is rendered (Authorized Version), "when I bring a cloud," etc.; beside, it is found in all ten times, always in poel, in preterite twice (the present passage and parallel), future once (Lev. xix. 26), participle seven times (Deut. xviii. 10, 14; Judg. ix. 37, margin), in which six places it is rendered (Authorized Version) "observing times," once in Isaiah and Micah with rendering "soothsayers," again in Isaiah "sorcerers," and in Jeremiah "enchanter." There is difficulty in fixing its exact meaning, though its general meaning may be embraced in the words of the Revised Version. A likely meaning, judging from derivation, may be the practising augury from observing of the *clouds.* The passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy are those that of old solemnly prohibited it. **And used enchantments**; Hebrew, וְנִחֵשׁ; the root is the familiar word for "serpent." The verb occurs eleven times, always in piel. The prohibition to practise such "enchantment" or *divination* is found in Lev. xix. 26 and xviii. 10; the five occasions of the use of the word in Genesis, however (xxx. 27; xliv. 5, 15), argue that it was not a thing intrinsically bad, but bad probably from certain, so to say, simoniacal possibilities to which it lent itself. There lay in it some assumption, no doubt, of superhuman help, and the wickedness may have consisted in assuming it where it was not real. **And used witchcraft**; Hebrew, וְכִשֵּׁף; Revised Version, *and practised sorcery.* The word is found six times in piel. The prohibition is found in Deut. xviii. 10; the rendering of the word (Authorized Version) is by the term "sorcery" three times, and "witch" or "witchcraft" the other three times. **Dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards.** The prohibitions are in Lev. xix. 31; xx. 6, 27; Deut. xviii. 11. See as illustrations 1 Sam. xxviii. 3—21; and notice the language of Isa. viii. 19, "that chirp and mutter;" and xix. 3.

Vers. 7, 8.—(Comp. Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14; 2 Sam. vii. 10.)

Ver. 7.—A carved image, the idol; translate, *a carved image of the idol;* i.e. the *Asherah;* for see the parallel (2 Kings xxi. 7). *The idol*; Hebrew, סֶמֶל. This name is found here and in ver. 15; in Deut. iv. 16, translated (Authorized Version) "figure;" and Ezek. viii. 3, 5, translated (Authorized Version) "image."

Ver. 10.—(See parallel, vers. 11—15.)

Ver. 11.—The contents of this and the following six verses (to the seventeenth) are not in the parallel, though their place there is plain. That parallel, however, supplies in its ver. 16 a very forcible narration of the evil conduct of Manasseh in Jerusalem itself, so that he "filled" it with "innocent blood" from "one end to another." **The King of Assyria;** *i.e.* either Esarhaddon, B.C. 680, or (though it is not probable) his son, Assur-bani-pal, B.C. 667—647. **Among the thorns;** *i.e.* with hooks or rings (so 2 Kings xix. 28, where the same word is used; as also in Exod. xxxv. 22; Isa. xxxvii. 29; Ezek. xix. 4, 9; xxix. 4; xxxviii. 4).

Ver. 13.—And prayed unto him. The apocryphal "Prayer of Manasses" is not at all likely to be authentic. **And brought him again to Jerusalem.** The Targum gives many mythical tales as to how this deliverance was effected. **Then Manasseh knew that.** Did he not know, well know, *before?* So far as the mode of expression may in any degree warrant such a stretch of charity, what an idea it gives of the force with which grossest error will captivate even *the taught;* and with what force of a furious wind did the contaminating influence of idolatries all around sweep betimes before them—these very kings and chief men of Judah and Jerusalem! It is evident that there was always among the people a "remnant" who kept the faith. See here, *e.g.*, the reference to the "*innocent* blood" shed in Jerusalem, no doubt blood of those who would not consent to idolatry—blood of noble martyrs.

Ver. 14.—The wall without; or, Revised Version, *the outer wall*, is probably one with that of Hezekiah (ch. xxxii. 5), which now Manasseh repairs, or rebuilds, and perhaps lengthens as well as heightens. The fish gate (Neh. xiii. 16), left on the north of Jerusalem, and opened on the main road for the sea (Conder's 'Handbook,' etc., p. 343). The wall traversed the north and east sides to Ophel, "on the wall" of which, it is said (ch. xxvii. 3), "Jotham built much." Hezekiah also built much there, and now Manasseh raised it up a very great height.

Ver. 15.—It will be noted how the mount of the house of the Lord is here differenced from the city. "The city" seems to have comprised the two hills east and west of the Tyropœan valley, and the "fore" city enclosed by the new wall (see Dr. Murphy's valuable little 'Handbook to Chronicles'). **The strange gods, the idol, and the altars** have all been mentioned in vers. 3—7.

Ver. 17.—Compare Hezekiah's good work (ch. xxxi. 1) with his son's bad work (ch. xxxiii. 3); the latter could undo his father's good, but now could not undo his own evil! The illegitimate worshippings and offerings of high places, though they had been "winked at" from time to time by some of even the better of the kings, were of course essentially counter to the one national worship in the one temple, and to the offerings and sacrifices of the one national altar.

Ver. 18.—The parallel again obtains (2 Kings xxi. 17, 18), but in shorter form. **His prayer.** This is for the present, at any rate, lost, the apocryphal and the Septuagint manuscript version of it alike not genuine. **The words of the seers.** So again our compiler shows undesigned correspondence with the writer of the parallel, as above quoted (2 Kings xxi. 10—15). As to the original authorities quoted here, book of the kings, etc., and next verse, "the sayings of the seers," see Introduction, vol. i. § 5.

Ver. 20.—In his own house. The parallel has, "In the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza;" *i.e.*, with little doubt, what had been formerly the garden of one Uzza.

Ver. 21.—The long reign of Manasseh of fifty-five years—a signal and merciful instance of space given for repentance—ended, his death met him presumably at the age of sixty-seven. The son who succeeded him was twenty-two years old, born therefore not before his father was forty-five years old. This may be an indication that it was indeed not one son only whom Manasseh "caused to pass through the fire" (ver. 6). He emulated the sins of the former life of his father, but did not, like him, repent. It will be noted that in ver. 19 of the parallel his mother's name is given as "Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz, of Jotbah," of whom nothing is known.

Ver. 24.—His servants conspired. So also Joash and Amaziah had been punished, the latter avenging the death of his father on those servants who had caused it (2 Kings xiv. 5; ch. xxiv. 25, 26; xxv. 27).

Ver. 25.—The people of the land. The emphatic expression here used (as also in the parallel), with its repetition in same verse making it more so, may either betray the unfortunate sympathy that the worse element of the nation felt with the bad king and his evil ways, or it may mean that the healthier element of the people insisted on the right respect being observed to the proper succession. The conduct of Josiah from very tender years, which could not have been entirely his own, but must be credited in part to those who taught and influenced him, throws the balance of probability, perhaps, into this latter and more charitable view. The parallel contains two closing verses (25, 26) additional to what we have, giving the authority as the "book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah," and stating that Amon also "was buried in his sepulchre, in the garden of Uzza."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*Uncertain repentances.* While the father Hezekiah filled one of the niches of the three typical best kings, his son Manasseh, the thirteenth King of Judah, by mournful contrast, occupies one of those of the three worst of all the kings of both lines, the other two being Jeroboam and Ahab. His reign, filling the longest space of all, viz. fifty-five years, occupies but a very unequal space on the page of the present history, and a yet shorter in the parallel (2 Kings xxi. 1—18). Eventful as it was, its eventfulness was of such a character that the historians may be pardonably credited with the very natural disposition to get over it as quickly as was possible. But from another point of view, the brevity marks significantly enough one unrelieved tale, one catalogued accumulation of personal sin, and sin against his high office and position, sin against his nation, and that sin—some of the worst of all sin—which consisted in seducing (ver. 9 and 2 Kings xxi. 9) others to sin. The phenomena spread before the student in this chapter exhibit the King Manasseh—

I. TOUCHING THE LOWEST DEPTHS OF SIN THAT HAD DISTINGUISHED EITHER THRONE OF THE RENDED KINGDOM. The following particulars may be identified, as *e.g.*: 1. The general type of his evil work resembled him to "the heathen, whom God" had actually driven out as intolerable, while making room in the land for his own people. 2. The evil work which he did was an *un*doing of good work, and that the good of his own father before him. "He built again what Hezekiah his father had broken down" (ver. 3). 3. The evil work which he did was so much worse than that of King Ahaz (ch. xxviii. 24), who shut up "the house of the Lord," in that it proceeded to the sacrilegious profanity of "building altars" for idolatrous worship, and "for all the host of heaven" in that house itself, "whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my Name be for ever." In "*that* house" also he set "a carved image . . . idol." 4. The evil work which he did was a persuading and seducing of the people (over whom he was presumably shepherd) to sin, so strong as to amount to little less than compulsion. Note how often the peculiar circumstances surrounding a tempter's tempting make the tempting so called, in nothing appreciable to fall short of compulsion. The serpent's tempting of Eve was discretion itself as compared with the brute force and the overpowering force with which evil and sin itself are *proffered* (?) to the mind, heart, hand, of many a helpless one, many a helpless thousand in the vortex of modern civilization, its methods and systems. 5. The evil work did not shrink or stay before the enormity of "shedding innocent blood" (2 Kings xxi. 16)—that triumph of devilishness—but e'en carried it to such excess that could make it possible for the historian to write, that with the wickedness "he filled Jerusalem from one end to another," making it to ring again with its sorrows and "cries from the ground," and with his sin.

II. WARNED IN AN EXCEPTIONALLY FORCIBLE MANNER. Allusion is made to this interposition in our vers. 10, 18; but fuller information respecting it is given in 2 Kings xxi. 10—15, and especially vers. 12, 13, in language that has indeed made its mark. For the expression (ver. 12), "both his ears shall tingle," see 1 Sam. iii. 11; Jer. xix. 3; and upon the latter verse (ver. 13), see Rogers's 'Superhuman Origin of the Bible,' p. 268 (1st edit., 8vo). Note what a *real* force, though so often neglected, "*warning*" should be.

III. Suffering the most abject degradation of capture and humiliation of punishment. This is expressed in ver. 11, compared with 2 Kings xix. 28; Amos iv. 2; Job xli. 2; see also again Rogers's 'Superhuman Origin of the Bible,' p. 286. The retribution in the mode and the place of punishment is to be observed. It is the Assyrians who carry him away, but his captivity is to Babylon.

IV. His exceeding humbling of himself with entreaties and prayer before God in his affliction, and because of affliction. There are sufficient reasons for believing that there were present alike some *penitence* and some *repentance* in this humbling of himself, and beseeching "of the Lord his God," and "prayer to the God of his fathers." For God heard the prayer, in some sense also undeniably answered it,—brought Manasseh again to Jerusalem and to his throne there. It is also said that Manasseh came to be convinced of what he should never have doubted, that "the Lord he was God" (ver. 13); that he reversed his former idolatrous practices and commands, cast out idols and altars from the city, repaired God's altar and offered peace offerings and thank offerings (vers. 15, 16), and began other useful works for the defence of Jerusalem and his country. If he cleared himself, however, it is plain that he could not succeed in winning the people away with a perfect heart from "the high places," and their sacrifices and worship there (ver. 17), which temptation it was he who had again put in their way at the beginning. How often has God's ready mercy and abundant pity run to meet and to help and to receive a penitence that did not prove itself after all pungent and intrinsically deep and lasting! How often does he still manifest himself thus "ready to forgive," while the strictest and severest self-searchings of our own hearts as to their sincerity and purity remain to be challenged! It is indeed to be noted, and it is a thing unexplained, and painfully, warningly suggestive, that one of the inspired histories (our parallel) has not a single word to say of his repentance and amendment; as though, whatever it were personally, and *not* a case "where tears of penance came too late for grace" for the individual, yet such repentance *was* all too late to rehabilitate his character, redeem his reign, or undo for a miserable nation the worst of *his* sins' consequences!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The apostate.* Well indeed was it for King Hezekiah that he did not foresee, though he may have *feared* (see previous homily), the character and the course of his son and successor. Had he done so, not all his riches and honour, not all his treasuries and storehouses, not all his flocks and herds, not all his watercourses and other works, would have removed sorrow from his heart. There has never, in any land, been a greater change, a sadder reaction, than that experienced by Judah when the godly Hezekiah was succeeded by the apostate Manasseh. It is true, indeed—

I. That pity as well as blame may be extended to the young king. He was but twelve when he ascended the throne of Judah. He was far too young to encounter the peculiar temptations of sovereignty; and there was much excuse for him if, at that tender age, he allowed his own youthful inclinations to be overborne by the counsels of those so much older and so much more experienced than himself. In view of his circumstances, we may commiserate as much as we condemn him. No one need wish to occupy a higher position than his years, his experience, his training, have fitted him to fill. Its honours and its emoluments, however great they may be, are of no account at all in view of the immense disadvantage at which such a one is placed, and of the temptations to which he is exposed. Let youth wait its time; let it not seize the opportunity before the hour is ripe; let it understand that the position of subjection, of apprenticeship, of culture (special or general), is a far happier and far wiser one *for the present*, and that it is the one hope of a really prosperous and honourable career.

II. That moral evil may be hit very hard, and yet not be slain. Nothing will account for the speedy apostasy of Judah but the supposition that there was a vigorous idolatrous party at court, or that beneath the outward conformity of the previous reign there was a secret and yet strong inclination toward the practices of the time of Ahaz. Hezekiah did well to put down the altars and the "high places" with the unsparing energy he showed. But it was proved once more that it is one thing to remove the temptation and another thing to change the character. No reformer must be satisfied until he has reason to be convinced that sin is rooted out of the heart as well as taken out of the hand, that righteousness is loved within as well as manifested without.

III. THAT SIN LEADS RAPIDLY DOWN FROM BAD TO WORSE. It is painful, indeed, to think of the lad carefully cultured in Hebrew ways of piety and morality going down into such sad depths of sin and shame as are indicated in the text (vers. 3, 4, 5, 7). Not all at once, but by somewhat rapid stages, he went on and down from the piety and purity of his boyhood to the "depths of Satan," as they may be called. That is too often the lamentable course of sin. It takes but a few years for the soul that was taught to hate iniquity and to shrink from its touch to become familiar with its phases and to become an adept in its practices. The "monster of the hideous mien," when we have become

> ". . . familiar with its face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Shun the first step that leads down the evil slope.

IV. THAT SIN BECLOUDS THE INTELLECT WHILE IT DEGRADES THE SOUL. Manasseh "used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit," etc. (ver. 6). When men leave the rational service of the one Lord of all, and betake themselves either to superstition or to unbelief, they are very apt to yield themselves up to the greatest follies; to accept theories and to practise arts which a very moderate share of intelligence condemns as childish and vain. Only in the way of Divine truth shall we tread the path of human wisdom; once out of that track we lose our way, and wander in labyrinths of folly and of error. With Jesus Christ for our Teacher, we shall shun those byways of folly which would dishonour and degrade us.

V. THAT ONE SINFUL SOUL MAY WORK A WORLD OF HARM. "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen," etc. (ver. 9). Perhaps those who first used their influence to withdraw him from the service of Jehovah shrank from some of the "developments" of their own work; but when we send a human spirit on a downward course, we little know whither that course will lead, or in what it will end. There are scarcely any limits to the evils which one bad life may work or start. Heavy indeed is the responsibility, great is the guilt, of those who lead the young astray, and send them along a path where they not only err and fail themselves, but scatter broadcast the seeds of sin and sorrow.—C.

Vers. 10—17.—*The penitent.* In these words we have—

I. THE LAST AND WORST SYMPTOM OF DEPARTURE FROM GOD—OBDURACY. "The Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken" (ver. 10). Sin reaches its extremity when it deliberately and determinately closes its ear against the recognized voice of God. A defiant refusal to listen when God is speaking to us is surely the *ne plus ultra* of iniquity; guilt can go no further (see Prov. i. 24—33).

II. THE DESCENT OF THE DIVINE PENALTY. When other means of instruction and of influence have been tried and failed, God visits in severe discipline. To Manasseh this came in defeat, humiliation (he was bound in fetters), and captivity; he had to leave the city of David and the land of his fathers, and become a show in the distant land of the enemy. To us the Divine discipline comes in various ways, of which the most common are bodily affliction, the vision of death, substantial loss, the estrangement of those who had been near and dear to us, some form of bitter humiliation, bereavement and consequent loneliness.

III. THE RISE OF TRUE PENITENCE IN THE HUMAN HEART. At length Manasseh had his eyes opened, and he saw his folly and his sin; at length he learnt that he had not only forsaken the good way of his father Hezekiah, but had grievously and guiltily departed from the living God. We can never tell what will humble the heart of a man; one is affected and subdued by one affliction, another by another. But at length the blow falls, and the edge of the sword enters in, and the heart bleeds, and it is wounded not unto death, but unto life. 1. Then comes *recognition of the truth.* Then God is recognized—his nearness, his claims, his displeasure, his fatherly purpose.

Then guilt also is discerned—its greatness, its heinousness. 2. Then comes *acknowledgment and appeal.* The heart humbles itself before God, even as Manasseh now "humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers" (ver. 12); and the soul prays for mercy, asks that its guilt may be forgiven, and itself restored. 3. And then comes *self-surrender;* for if there be not a willingness, a readiness to yield ourselves unto God, an exhibition of penitence is only an affectation; it is unreal and untrue. If it is genuine, it *must* be accompanied by a pure desire and a firm resolve to return unto him whom we have guiltily forsaken.

IV. THE BESTOWAL OF DIVINE MERCY. Manasseh soon found how immeasurable had been his mistake in his great apostasy. For the God of his fathers proved to be a God full of compassion and of great mercy, and he heard the humbled suppliant and restored him, and brought him back to his kingdom. So God now hears and pardons and restores; he forgives us our sin, and he takes us back to his Divine favour, and he restores to us our peace, our hope, our joy, our life in him and with him. For there is one invariable and inseparable sequence, viz.—

V. NEWNESS OF LIFE ON THE PART OF THE FORGIVEN. Manasseh goes back to Jerusalem, takes away the strange gods and the altars he had built, and casts them out of the city; and he repairs the altar of the Lord, and re-establishes the worship of Jehovah (vers. 15, 16). We return unto God, and at the same time to all purity, to all temperance, to all uprightness, to all reverence both in spirit and in action, to all piety of thought and of behaviour. This is precious indeed, beyond all price, this restoration to God and to our true self; yet is there—

VI. ONE SERIOUS DRAWBACK. Manasseh could not altogether undo what he had done. "*Nevertheless* the people did sacrifice," etc. (ver. 17). He could not, by one enactment or by a number of them, bring back the situation he had so completely broken up. It takes a long time to restore a people to the habits they have forsaken. Nor could Manasseh recall to life the brave and faithful men whom he had "done to death" with his cruelties (2 Kings xxi. 16). There are some things which the most genuine repentance will not effect. It will not recall the wasted years; nor undo the malign and death-bearing influences which have been at work in human hearts and lives; nor compensate the wronged for the injuries they have suffered in body or in spirit. Therefore let all remember that, while repentance and restoration are blessed, a life of holy service from the beginning is far more blessed still.—C.

Vers. 21—25.—*The forfeited heritage.* It is but very little we know or think of Amon: his name is unfamiliar, for his life was uneventful. And yet why should not he have had as happy, as glorious, as useful a career as David, or as Hezekiah, or as Josiah? He had a very fair opportunity before him, but he lost it by his own folly. Let us look at—

I. THE GOLDEN CHANCE THAT WAS BEFORE HIM. He was heir to the throne of Judah. Measured by some monarchies, ancient and modern, that was small enough. But it was no despicable fortune. As our own country's history shows, we must not reckon the worth of a kingdom by its geographical dimensions. Under David and Solomon the kingdom of Israel was a real power, if not a "great power" in that age. And then it was open to Amon to conciliate the tribes of Israel as his noble grandfather had done, and perhaps to win them back. At any rate, the kingdom of Judah was itself no mean heritage; its men and women were far above the average of humanity in intelligence, in civilization, in an appreciation of freedom, in courage, in all the elements of human power. To govern Judah might well satisfy the ambition of a strong and aspiring mind. And there was one thing about Judah that could not be claimed either for Assyria or Egypt. It was the chosen dwelling-place of God; if he were but worshipped and honoured there, his presence and his power would be a more sure guarantee of national independence and prosperity than countless hosts of armed men or of chariots of war. Judah was the home of God, and therefore of truth and of heavenly wisdom. To reign there was a choice heritage for a true man.

II. THE RECKLESSNESS WITH WHICH HE THREW IT AWAY. 1. He deliberately chose the evil course. At two and twenty he had not his father's excuse for being led astray. The stern discipline through which Manasseh had passed, and the mercy he had found in a forgiving God, surely should have affected and controlled his son. But he disregarded and defied the lessons which were written in such large characters before his face, and chose the evil way (ver. 22). 2. He declined to be corrected and restored; he persisted in the path of wrong (ver. 23). 3. He excited the hatred of those whom he governed, and brought about an early and ignominious death, enjoying but two brief years of kingly rule (ver. 24). Thus, after a dishonourable and reactionary reign, he came to a miserable and inglorious end, and thus he forfeited his heritage.

1. There is a very goodly heritage before us as the children of men. It will probably include something fair and bright of this world's estate, some pure enjoyment of which we may partake gladly and gratefully. It will certainly include the knowledge of God; the opportunity of worshipping and of serving him everywhere and in every relation we sustain; the means of cultivating a holy and a noble character; openings for usefulness in many ways, and particularly in the way of helping others on in the path of life; the opportunity of preparing for a far broader sphere and a far fuller life in the kingdom of heaven. 2. We may find ourselves tempted to forfeit this good estate. It is alienable by a sinful preference of the lower good, by a guilty disregard of Divine voices, by a perilous postponement of sacred obligation to some future time. 3. It is our true wisdom and our bounden duty to take at once that decisive step (of self-surrender to our Lord) which places us within the kingdom of God, and secures for us the lasting friendship of a Divine Redeemer.—C.

Vers. 1—20.—*The reign of Manasseh.* I. ITS EARLY COMMENCEMENT. Manasseh, "One who forgets" (Gesenius)—an exceedingly appropriate name for one who in his lifetime forgat God and every good thing; in the inscriptions *Minasi*; perhaps so called "in allusion to the zeal with which the northern tribe had joined in Hezekiah's reforms" (ch. xxx. 11), or to the desire which prevailed in Hezekiah's reign for a union of the two kingdoms" (Stanley)—was twelve years old when he ascended his father's throne (ver. 1). A wise child may be better than a foolish king (Eccles. iv. 13); but, as a rule, "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child" (Prov. xxii. 15), while wisdom is the ripe fruit of age and experience (Job xxxii. 7). The experiment of boy-kings—unless where these have been placed under regents or guided by wise counsellors, as were Joash (ch. xxiv. 2) and Uzziah (ch. xxvi. 5)—has seldom been successful (Eccles. x. 16); though Manasseh's grandson, Josiah, must be pronounced an honourable and brilliant exception (ch. xxxiv. 2).

II. ITS EVIL CHARACTER. Manasseh "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (ver. 2). 1. *In imitation of the heathen.* Whether he endeavoured to become acquainted with all the heathen religions he could find, and to introduce them into Judah, and "for this purpose sent into the most distant lands where there was any famous cultus, and grudged no pains for his one object" (Ewald, 'History of Israel,' iv. 208)—which seems a pure conjecture on the part of the learned author who propounds it—it is undoubted that he resuscitated paganism and carried it to a higher degree of prevalence than it had ever before attained in Judah. (1) He restored all the Canaanitish abominations, *i.e.* the ancient worship on hill-tops, which had flourished under Ahaz, but which his father Hezekiah had destroyed (vers. 2, 3). (2) He revived the Baal and Moloch worship of Phœnicia, which Ahab had introduced into Israel, rearing up altars for the Baalim, making Asheroth, or male and female statues, with their accompanying abominable houses (ver. 3), and setting up a Moloch idol in the vale of Hinnom, to which he sacrificed one, if not more, of his own sons (ver. 6), and encouraged his people to offer theirs (Jer. vii. 31, 32; xix. 2—6; xxxii. 35). (3) He extended the Assyrio-Chaldean star-worship, which his grandfather Ahaz had introduced (2 Kings xxiii. 12); he "worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them" (ver. 3). (On the nature of this worship, consult Exposition.) (4) "He plunged into all the mysteries of sorcery, auguries, and necromancy" (Stanley); "he practised augury, and used enchantments, and practised sorcery, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits" (ver. 6). "Magic occupied an important place in the regards of the upper classes in Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt. At Babylonia the interpretation of omens was reduced to a science" (Rawlinson, 'Kings of Israel and Judah,' p. 206). 2. *In dishonour of his father.* "He built again the high places his father Hezekiah had thrown down" (ver. 3). Two things may have accounted for this sudden outbreak of paganism after Hezekiah's death. (1) The superficial character of Hezekiah's reformation, which, though extensive enough, reaching to the furthest limits of Judah (ch. xxxi. 1), does not appear to have been sufficiently intensive (see Isa. xxviii.—xxxii.). The heathen party which had the upper hand during Ahaz's reign, though suppressed by Hezekiah with Isaiah's help, was not destroyed. The spirit of idolatry, compelled to be quiet and in a measure hold itself in abeyance, was neither eradicated from the community nor greatly weakened in its energy—merely it was waiting a convenient opportunity to start up with renewed life and vigour. To this party belonged Shebna, the treasurer whose deposition Isaiah demanded (Isa. xxii. 15—25). (2) The youth of Manasseh on acceding to the throne. Whether Hezekiah's only son (Josephus, 'Ant.,' x. 2. 1) or not (Ewald, 'History of Israel,' iv. 206, note), Manasseh was only twelve years of age on assuming the regal dignity, and must have been born three years after the illness referred to in the preceding chapter (ch. xxxii. 24). His father's death, therefore, having thrown him into the hands of the heathen party at a tender and susceptible age, he was quickly perverted from the right way of the Lord. Even the example, teaching, and prayers of his mother, Hephzibah (2 Kings xxi. 1), traditionally reported to have been Isaiah's daughter, were powerless to resist the corrupting influences of the statesmen and courtiers who surrounded him. "The young years of Manasseh gave advantage to his miscarriage; even while he might have been under the ferule, he swayed the sceptre. Whither may not a child be drawn, especially to a gairish and puppet-like superstition? As infancy is capable of all impressions, so most of the worst" (Bishop Hall). 3. *In defiance of Jehovah.* Not content with re-establishing idolatry in general, he proceeded to put a special affront upon Jehovah. (1) He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts (outer and inner) of the house of the Lord (ver. 5), thus desecrating the city of which Jehovah had said, "In Jerusalem shall my Name be for ever" (ver. 4). (2) In the house of God, perhaps in the holy place, he set the graven image of the idol he had made (ver. 7), *i.e.* of the Phœnician Astarte, so dishonouring the city and the temple of which God had said, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my Name for ever" (ver. 7), and braving the Divine threatening Jehovah had pronounced against apostasy from his Law and worship (ver. 8). That he "went so far as to remove the altar from the forecourt of the temple, and the ark from the holy of holies" (Ewald), though not certain, is at least probable (cf. ver. 16; xxxv. 3; Jer. iii. 16). (3) He along with his people rejected the admonitions of Jehovah's prophets (ver. 10; cf. 2 Kings xxi. 10). Whether one of these was Hozai, who survived Manasseh's reign and recorded its chief events (ver. 19), whether Isaiah lived into the times of Hezekiah's son, and whether Habakkuk was one of those who remonstrated with Manasseh, cannot be determined. Their message, however, has been recorded (2 Kings xxi. 12—15)—a prediction of impending destruction for Jerusalem because of her sovereign's and her people's sins. Yet neither Manasseh nor his people would hearken. "They loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." They refused to be warned of the perilous career upon which they had entered. "They hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of his counsel; they despised all his reproof" (Prov. i. 29, 30). (4) He employed against the prophets and professors of the true religion the unhallowed instrument of persecution. "He shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (2 Kings xxi. 16). "He barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflown with blood" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' x. 3. 1). Not the first instance in Scripture of a state persecution on account of religion (1 Kings xviii. 13); unhappily not the last (ch. xxxiv. 5).

III. Its long continuance. The worst king had the longest reign—fifty-five years. Perhaps: 1. *To discover the true character of the nation's sin*, to reveal the essentially evil nature of idolatry, the inherent wickedness of such apostasy from Jehovah as Manasseh and his subjects had been guilty of. For this reason God bore long with the antediluvian world, and still at times permits wicked men to cumber the ground through long years, while good men, on the other hand, appear to be cut off before their time. 2. *To signalize the Divine forbearance*, to make known to Manasseh and his subjects the Divine long-suffering, the desire on Jehovah's part that he and they should repent: as God still, for a like reason, exercises patience with wicked men (1 Tim. i. 16; 2 Pet.

iii. 15), being unwilling that any should perish, but that all should turn unto him and live (Ezek. xviii. 23, 32; xxxiii. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9). 3. *To vindicate the Divine justice*, in case the threatened judgments against Judah and Jerusalem should come to be fulfilled. After such an exhibition of the hideous character and bitter fruits of idolatry as had been given by Judah's king and people, and after such a display of patient forbearance on the part of Jehovah, when the stroke of judgment fell upon the apostate land, it would be impossible to say that it was either undeserved or premature; that either Judah's cup of iniquity was not full, or everything had not been done to secure her recovery from the evil path upon which she had entered (Isa. iv. 3—7).

IV. Its peaceful close. 1. *The king was converted.* "Manasseh humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers" (ver. 12). "Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God" (ver. 13; see next homily on vers. 11—17). 2. *The people were reformed.* In part at least a check was given to their idolatry. Though they continued to sacrifice on the high places, they did so "unto the Lord their God only" (ver. 17).

Learn: 1. That early promotion, except in grace, is frequently a grievous misfortune. 2. That piety in parents is no guarantee of piety in children. 3. That the alternation of good and evil rulers in the Church and in the state is not without its uses—on the one hand of comfort, on the other hand of trial. 4. That "length of days is no true rule of God's favour" (Hall). 5. That "we may not measure grace by means" (ibid.). 6. That "that mischief may be done in a day which many ages cannot redress" (ibid.). 7. That no degree of wickedness is beyond the reach of grace to forgive or remove.—W.

Vers. 11—17.—*Manasseh's repentance.* I. Its impelling cause. 1. *The grace of God.* That the regeneration and conversion of a soul is a work of Divine grace is taught hardly less clearly in the Old Testament (Deut. xxx. 6; 1 Kings viii. 58; Ps. cx. 3; Isa. xxvi. 12; Jer. xiii. 23; xxiv. 7; xxxi. 33; Ezek. xi. 19; Zech. xii. 10) than in the New (John i. 13; iii. 3; vi. 44, 63, 65; Eph. ii. 1—10; v. 14; Phil. i. 6). 2. *The judgments of Providence.* "The Lord brought upon him and his people the captains of the host of the King of Assyria" (ver. 11). (1) The King of Assyria here referred to was either Esarhaddon (B.C. 681—668), who succeeded Sennacherib, and therefore was contemporary with Manasseh during the first years of his reign (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 152; Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' p. 25); or Esarhaddon's son and successor, Assur-bani-pal, B.C. 668—the Sardanapalus of the Greeks (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 367; Kleinert, in Riehm's 'Handwörterbuch,' p. 948). An inscription of the former monarch mentions Manasseh King of Judah as one of his tributaries ('Records,' etc., iii. 107), while a similar inscription of the latter sovereign introduces as one of his tributaries the same Manasseh King of Judah (Schrader, p. 355). (2) The occasion of this expedition against Manasseh is not specified. If it happened under Esarhaddon, the monuments afford no information of any rising of the Palestinian states against Assyrian supremacy during his reign—Rawlinson ('Kings of Israel and Judah,' p. 207) conjectures that he may have "entered into negotiations with Tirhakah of Egypt;" if under Assur-bani-pal, Manasseh may have been suspected of sympathizing with Saulmugina of Babylon, Assur-bani-pal's rebellious brother, who about B.C. 648 (and therefore when Manasseh had been forty years upon the throne) endeavoured to assert his independence. (3) The capture and deportation of Manasseh, whom the Assyrian king's generals "took in chains," or "with hooks," and "bound with fetters," accords exactly with the representations given by the monuments. "The practice of bringing prisoners of importance into the presence of a conquering monarch by means of a thong attached to a hook or ring passed through their upper or their under lip, or both, is illustrated by the sculptures both of Babylonia and Assyria. Sargon is seen in his palace at Khorsabad receiving prisoners whose lips are thus perforated; and one of the few Babylonian sculptures still extant shows us a vizier conducting into the presence of a monarch two captives held in durance in the same way. Cruel and barbarous as such treatment of a captured king seems to us, there is no doubt that it was an Assyrian usage. To put a hook in a man's mouth and a bridle in his jaws (2 Kings xix. 28) was no mere metaphor expressive of defeat and capture, but a literal description of a practice that was common in the age and country—a practice from which their royal rank did not exempt even captured monarchs" (Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' p. 27). The 'Annals of Assur-bani-pal' speak of two Cimmerian chiefs whom Gyges King of Lydia, "in strong fetters of iron and bonds of iron, bound and with numerous presents caused to bring to his (Assur-bani-pal's) presence" ('Records,' etc., i. 70). (4) The destination of Manasseh's deportation—Babylon instead of Nineveh, as one might have supposed—is explained by the circumstance that Esarhaddon and Assur-bani-pal both assumed to themselves the title of "King of Assyria and Babylon," and instead of governing Babylon by means of a viceroy, themselves resided there a part of the year in a palace built by the former (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' p. 152; Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' p. 25; Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 316; Schrader, 'Keilinschriften,' p. 368).

II. ITS ACCOMPANYING SIGNS. 1. *Humility.* "He humbled himself greatly before the Lord God of his fathers" (ver. 12). This grace, beautiful in all who come before God (Job xxv. 5, 6; Eccles. v. 2), is absolutely indispensable to a penitent (Job xl. 4; Isa. vi. 5; Rom. vii. 18), and is the certain highway to spiritual promotion (Prov. xv. 33; Isa. lxvi. 2; Luke xviii. 13, 14). 2. *Prayer.* "He besought the Lord his God" (ver. 12); "he prayed unto him" (ver. 13)—no doubt with the language and feeling of (1) confession, acknowledging his trespasses (Job vii. 20; Ps. xxxii. 5; li. 3; Isa. lix. 12; Ezek. ix. 6; Dan. ix. 5); (2) submission, owning the just judgment of God upon himself and his people, without which no repentance can be sincere (Ezek. ix. 13; Ps. li. 4; Dan. ix. 7); (3) supplication, entreating Jehovah's favour and forgiveness, and in proof thereof restoration to his land and kingdom (compare Manasseh's prayer in the Apocrypha).

III. ITS CONSEQUENT FRUITS. 1. *Acceptance.* Jehovah "was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom" (ver. 13). So God still listens to the cries of sincere penitents when they call upon him for forgiveness and salvation, for emancipation from the condemnation of the Law and the enslaving yoke of sin (Job xxxiii. 27, 28; Isa. lv. 6, 7; lvii. 15; Jer. iii. 12—14; Luke xviii. 14; Jas. iv. 8). That Manasseh should have been restored to his throne and kingdom harmonized well with the mild character of Esarhaddon, who appears from the monuments to have accorded similar treatment to a son of Merodach-Baladan, and to an Aramæan chief of the Gambalu, both of whom on submitting to his authority were forgiven and reinstated in their former positions (Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' pp. 27, 28). Like clemency was extended by Assur-bani-pal to the King of Arvad's Yakinlu's sons, who, on kissing the great king's feet after their father's death, were favourably received—Azibahal the eldest being appointed to the kingdom of Arvad, and the others presented with clothing of linen and bracelets of gold ('Records,' etc., i. 69). Tammaritu King of Elam likewise experienced the great king's favour on making humble submission and acknowledgment of his offence (ibid., p. 78). 2. *Illumination.* "Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah he was God" (ver. 13). (1) The discovery Manasseh made was true even before he made it, at the very time when he thought it to be false. That Jehovah alone was God had been distinctly claimed by Jehovah himself (Exod. ix. 14; xx. 3), by Moses (Deut. iv. 35), by Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 2), by David (2 Sam. vii. 22), by Solomon (1 Kings viii. 23, 60), and by Isaiah (xlv. 5, 6, 21). So the fact that men may sometimes say or think there is no God (Ps. xiv 1) does not prove that there is none. (2) The ignorance of this sublime truth of the unity and soleity of Jehovah lay at the basis of Manasseh's devotion to idolatry. So the "Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds . . . through the ignorance that is in them" (Eph. iv. 17, 18). (3) Manasseh's apprehension of this truth was rather the result than the cause of his repentance. Manasseh turned to God when in distress out of a sense of sin, with an earnest desire after mercy, and (it may be assumed) with a sincere resolution after new obedience. It is not certain that at that stage he realized the theological fact that Jehovah alone was God. This dawned on him first, it would seem, in all its clearness when, in answer to his prayer, he became a conscious recipient of the Divine mercy. His experience in dealing with Jehovah—so different from that he had been acquainted with in serving idols—convinced him that these were nothing, and that Jehovah alone was God; and the discovery of this truth rendered his relapse into idolatry impossible. So men never clearly know God till they become participants of his mercy. 3 *Reformation.* "He took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord (ver. 7), and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, . . . and cast them out of the city" (ver. 15). Compare the earlier reformations of Joash (ch. xxiii. 17), and Hezekiah (ch. xxxi. 1), and the later of Josiah (ch. xxxiv. 3, 4). So in every case of true conversion there must be a putting away of known sin (Isa. i. 16; lv. 7; Matt. iii. 8). 4. *Separation.* The people continued to sacrifice on the high places, though only unto the Lord their God (ver. 17). On their part it was a compromise. Willing to advance half-way on the path of reformation, they would not make a clean severance between themselves and idolatry. Manasseh did not so. 5. *Consecration.* "He repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings" (ver. 16). So far as he himself was concerned, he was done with the high places; and his regal authority, backed up by his personal example, he faithfully employed to induce his subjects to have done with them also.

LESSONS. 1. The benefits and design of affliction. 2. The value and use of prayer. 3. The graciousness of God towards penitents. 4. The marvellous illumination that comes with the new life. 5. The certainty that holiness will flow from a personal experience of mercy. 6. The intermixture of imperfection with the best services of saints.—W.

Vers. 18—20.—*Lessons from the life of Manasseh.* I. A LURID LIGHT UPON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SIN. Manasseh's career brings into prominence certain truths upon the subject of human depravity which in these days of so-called culture and refinement are prone to be pushed aside, ignored, and forgotten. 1. *That sin, wickedness, a disposition to go astray from the paths of virtue, is an inborn characteristic of the human soul in its fallen condition;* is a native product springing up out of the soil of man's interior being, and does not simply come upon him from without as the result of his environment, as the combined effect of the circumstances by which he is surrounded and of the examples by which he is directed. This is what theologians are accustomed to call the doctrine of original sin—a doctrine which Scripture with perfect clearness announces (Ps. li. 5), which experience everywhere attests (1 Kings viii. 46; Eccles. vii. 20), which modern science with its law of heredity strikingly confirms, and which lends peculiar emphasis to the teaching of Christ as to the new birth (John iii. 7). 2. *That this inborn principle of sin frequently reveals itself at unexpected times and under totally unlooked-for conditions.* Concerning Manasseh one would have felt disposed to reason that if ever a child had the chance of being good, or at least of keeping down the evil that was in him, that child was the son of Hezekiah. Yet scarcely had he come to the throne at the early age of twelve than the wickedness of his nature began to break forth in almost full-blown violence. It is a warning to parents not to slacken in their diligence or abate in their efforts to promote the godly education of their children, since the season for impressing them with right views of truth and instilling into them right principles of action is at the longest extremely short, and if neglected may lead to irreparable disaster in after-life; while it is a much-needed reminder that not even pious parents can infallibly secure the conversion of their children, and that after all these have the determination of their future characters and destinies largely in their own hands. 3. *That the development of evil in human hearts and lives is often rapid and always downward.* At least it was so with this infatuated prince, who began by exhibiting a singular precocity in sin, and ended not until he had all but exhausted the catalogue of crime. If he proceeded no further in his downward career than sacred story represents, the reason likely was that his ingenuity could devise nothing more atrocious. Indeed, one cannot help discovering in him a prototype of Shakespeare's Aaron, who says—

> "Tut! I have done a thousand dreadful things
> As willingly as one would kill a fly;
> And nothing grieves me heartily indeed,
> But that I cannot do ten thousand more."
> ('Titus Andronicus,' act v. sc. 1.)

II. VALUABLE COUNSEL AS TO THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL USES OF ADVERSITY. 1. *It is always intended as a means of religious and moral improvement, whether it be laid on saint or sinner.* The Lord doth not afflict men willingly, but for their profit, that they might be partakers of his holiness (Lam. iii. 33; Heb. xii. 10). In the case of saints it has this for its primary end (Heb. xii. 11); but even in the case of sinners this end is not neglected or overlooked. Calamity may fall on them directly as punishment; yet it always aims at their arrestment, reformation, and conversion. 2. *It frequently succeeds when every other means of improvement fails.* In the case of Manasseh nothing appeared potent enough to arrest him on his mad career—not the memory of his good father or of his pious mother, not the infinite folly of the idolatries he was keeping up, not the shame in which his immoralities involved him before the people, not the blood of his innocent victims, not the mourning and lamentation of his bereaved subjects, not the feelings of his own parental bosom, not the reproofs of Jehovah's prophets, not the terrors of his own conscience. Not until God put a hook into his nose and led him off to captivity in Babylon did he pause and begin to reflect on his wickedness. And the same function is performed by affliction yet. God frequently employs it to pull up those whom he perceives rushing headlong to perdition, when other and milder methods have been used in vain.

III. A SPLENDID ILLUSTRATION OF THE FREENESS AND THE POWER OF DIVINE GRACE. 1. *The steps of Manasseh's recovery.* (1) Penitence. He was awakened to a sense of his by-past ungodly career, and filled with sincere and heartfelt contrition on its account. (2) Prayer. He was moved to cry for mercy from that God against whom he had offended. (3) Pardon. The Lord was entreated of him, and he was forgiven. He was restored to his kingdom. 2. *The ground of Manasseh's recovery.* (1) Certainly not good works in the sense of meritorious actions, because penitence and prayer are both good in the sense of being commanded duties. (2) Solely the grace or loving-kindness of God, which besides was magnified in pardoning so great a transgressor.

IV. NECESSARY INSTRUCTION AS TO THE ONLY SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OF CONVERSION AND SALVATION. 1. *Illumination.* "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." This was true all the same, whether Manasseh knew it or not, and all the while Manasseh was doing his best by the worship of idols to show that he believed the opposite. That which convinced him of his error was his experience of the Divine clemency. Whereas his service of idols had not been able to prevent his deportation to Babylon, no sooner had he transferred his allegiance to Jehovah than his captivity was ended. This sufficed to draw the veil from Manasseh's eyes. So men never really come to know God till they have been made partakers of his mercy in Christ. That which renders nugatory and worthless much of present-day objection to God and Christ, the Bible and the gospel, is that it commonly proceeds from them that know neither the one nor the other. 2. *Reformation.* Manasseh's conversion was authenticated by change of behaviour as well as change of mind. He took away the foreign gods out of the house of the Lord, and removed from both the temple and the city all the altars he had built for their worship. He repaired also the altar of the Lord, and commanded his subjects to serve the Lord God of Israel only. So in all cases of true conversion there must be the putting away of every known sin, the consecration of every individual power, and the performance of every known duty.—W.

Vers. 21—25.—*Manasseh and Amon—father and son: a parallel and a contrast.* I. MANASSEH AND AMON RESEMBLED EACH OTHER. Both were: 1. *Men.* No higher dignity attainable on earth than that of manhood; higher than any purely temporal or social distinction is that of having been made in the Divine image. 2. *Kings.* Though often desecrated and abused, the position of a sovereign is one of great honour and responsibility. As vicegerents of Jehovah, the theocratic potentates of Israel and Judah stood upon the highest possible pinnacle of kingly renown. 3. *Idolaters.* Amon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father (ver. 22). "Like father, like son," is the common experience—the exceptions only proving the rule. 4. *Sufferers.* Manasseh taken captive by Esarhaddon or Assurbani-pal; Amon conspired against and killed by his own servants.

II. MANASSEH AND AMON DIFFERED FROM EACH OTHER. They contrasted in: 1. *Names.* Manasseh was so called (probably, at least) after an Israelitish tribe (see homiletics on vers. 1—20); Amon was named after an Egyptian god. The first was most likely traceable to Hezekiah's piety; the second due to Manasseh's impiety. 2. *Reigns.* Manasseh ruled Judah for fifty-five years; Amon for two. God determines to nations and individuals, to kings and subjects, the bounds of their habitations and the length of their days (Acts xvii. 26). 3. *Careers.* Manasseh repented, turned to Jehovah, and lived; Amon died as he had lived, an insensate idolater and hardened transgressor. 4. *Ends.* Manasseh died a natural, Amon a violent death.

Learn (1) the resemblances and (2) the differences which exist between man and man, in the home, in the world, in the Church.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

This chapter, with the following, embraces the entire of the beneficent reign of Josiah, son of Amon—the son an illustrious contrast to the father. The parallel (2 Kings xxii.—xxiii. 30) is less full, and also, so far as chronology goes, less clear in the earlier verses. For once the writer of Kings spends his strength more largely than our compiler on the moral and religious aspects of Josiah's work, and is rather scantier in the detail of his external works for his nation, city of Jerusalem, and temple. He, however, gives very much less prominence to the matter of the celebration of the Passover.

Ver. 1.—Again the name of the mother is omitted. From the parallel we learn she was "Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath."

Ver. 3.—This, with the following four verses, forms the commentary on the statement of ver. 2, that Josiah "declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left." We cannot mistake the allusion in this verse to his *personal* religion at, say, sixteen years of age, as the foundation of his religious reign and of the practical devotion to reformation, instanced as commencing with his twentieth year. It may be here noted that the Prophet Jeremiah was called to his work in the year following thereupon, or, perhaps, the very same year (Jer. i. 1, 2). It is highly likely that Josiah and Jeremiah were given to one another providentially, to co-operate in all good works, now so needed for Church and state. The three dates of the *eighth*, *twelfth*, and (ver. 8) the *eighteenth* year of Josiah's reign were dates memorable in his life. For the two kinds of images of this verse, see succeeding note.

Ver. 4.—Note references in Lev. xxvi. 1, 30. **The images, that were on high above them**; *i.e.*, as Revised Version, the *sun-images* (הַחַמָּנִים). The word and name occur only eight times—in Leviticus as just quoted; in our Second Book of Chronicles three times; in Isaiah twice; and in Ezekiel twice. **The groves**; *i.e.* the *Asherim*; again as last verse. **The carved images**; Revised Version, *graven images*; Hebrew, הַפְּסִלִים. This word is found twenty-two times, occurring in Deuteronomy, Judges, Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Micah. **The molten images**; Hebrew, הַמַּסֵּכוֹת. This word also occurs just twenty-two times, from Exodus downwards. **Made dust of them and strowed it** (so Exod. xxxii. 20; 2 Kings xxiii. 6).

Ver. 5.—Note herein the striking fulfilment of 1 Kings xiii. 1—3, of which our parallel (2 Kings xxiii. 12—14, 16—20) gives a more detailed account, especially as regards Israel, though not failing to recognize Judah and Jerusalem's share in the need of purgation and punishment.

Ver. 6.—**In the cities of Manasseh, . . . Ephraim, . . . Simeon, even unto Naphtali.** Manasseh and Ephraim lay very nearly in the centre of the whole land, while Simeon and Naphtali were respectively at the southern and northern extremities. **With their mattocks.** This rendering may be correct, and cannot be said to be foreign to the sense and connection of the passage, the Hebrew word in that case being the feminine plural of חֶרֶב. Perhaps, however, the word is one with that found in Ps. cix. 10, and may be rendered "in their ruined," *i.e.* semi-ruined, "condition." Note Keri also, which favours the latter reading; the Septuagint shows simply words which may best translate, *and in their neighbourhoods respectively*.

Ver. 7.—**When.** Cut out this word, which represents nothing in the original.

Ver. 8.—It is in some sense as though the work of purification, atoning, penitence, must precede that of practical repentance, of repairing, restoring, rebuilding. The original, however, does not warrant the laying of any stress on the when, found again in the Authorized Version. **Shaphan.** In the parallel (2 Kings xxii. 3) Shaphan is designated "the scribe." His descendants, to the second generation, at all events, did him honour (Jer. xxvi. 24; xxix. 3; xxxvi. 10, 12, 25; Ezek. viii. 11; see also 2 Kings xxv. 22). The names of Maaseiah (Jer. xxxv. 4) and Joah (2 Kings xviii. 18) are known, but not marking the present persons.

Ver. 9.—**Hilkiah the high priest.** Of

Hilkiah's ancestors and descendants we learn something in the following references: 1 Chron. vi. 13, 14; ix. 11; 2 Kings xxv. 18; Neh. xi. 11; Ezra vii. 1. **They delivered.** This means that Hilkiah's people *delivered* of what they had collected to Shaphan and his colleagues, who again in their turn (ver. 10) "put it into the hand of the workmen," etc. This is certainly the meaning of 2 Kings xxii. 4—9. **And they returned to Jerusalem;** translate, *and of the dwellers in Jerusalem.* Note Keri, and see ch. xxxv. 18; and Septuagint rendering here and there.

Ver. 10.—**And they put it;** *i.e.* Shaphan and colleagues, according to the parallel.

Ver. 11.—The exact work done we are unable to follow with precision. The parallel describes it, in more general terms, as "repairing the breaches." The repairs here spoken of, however, betoken, to say the least the rough usage, as well as "negligence," of kings like Manasseh and Amon, and suggest a further question as to the nature of those heathen and idolatrous practices, which cost so much to the very structure of temple and houses, *i.e.* probably the contiguous chambers of the main building (1 Kings vi. 5), the exact style of which, however, is very doubtful.

Ver. 12.—**Faithfully.** Refer back to note, ch. xxxi. 12. **To set . . . forward;** Hebrew, לְנַצֵּחַ; the idea, of course, not so much that of expediting, as of guiding and instructing. The mention of those Levites whose business was music is rather a surprise, and is not found in the parallel.

Ver. 13.—**Scribes.** Considering the mention of "scribes" in the plural in 1 Kings iv. 3, although it stands alone, till, at all events, the time of Hezekiah (as testified by Prov. xxv. 1), it is at any rate not improbable that an order of scribes was instituted by Solomon; that it fell into desuetude immediately under the divided kingdom, and, coming into vogue again under Hezekiah, is now mentioned in the natural way we here find it. The mention of the "scribe" in the singular number is of frequent occurrence in the historic books, and in Isaiah (xxxiii. 18; xxxvi. 22). **The officers.** This word reproduces, in the Hebrew, the familiar *shoterim* of Exod. v. 10 (see also 1 Chron. xxiii. 3—6).

Ver. 14.—The *time* of this verse is not free from ambiguity, which the parallel does not remove. It purports either that, on occasion of "bringing out the money," Hilkiah providentially *lighted* on his find, or that he availed himself of that occasion to report and give up the find made some time or other previously. The italic-type word "*given*," in this verse, it is better to discard, and to restore the omitted words, "by the hand of;" *i.e.* the book was either Moses' original handwriting and solemn deposit (Deut. xxxi. 26)—in that case nearly eight centuries and a half old—or, at any rate, the standard copy and authorized successor of it, though we nowhere read of such a copy having been made, nor is it necessary to doubt the durability of the original. **A book** should be rendered *the book.*

Ver. 18.—The implication on the face of this verse as of the parallel (2 Kings xxii. 10), is that Shaphan leaves the king to surmise (which he very quickly does), from hearing a portion (Hebrew here, *read in it;* in parallel, "read it") of the book, what it was.

Ver. 19.—With one insignificant exception (the omission here of the word סֵפֶר), the words of this verse are identical with the parallel in its ver. 11. The same, to all purposes, may be said of our twelve succeeding verses, compared with the parallel in its ver. 12—ch. xxiii. 3. The king rent his clothes, in grief that the practice of his nation had diverged so terribly from their ever-to-be-venerated Law.

Ver. 20.—**Ahikam the son of Shaphan** (see Jer. xxvi. 24; xl. 5). **Abdon the son of Micah.** The parallel (2 Kings xxii. 12) and the Syriac Version have "Achbor the son of Michaiah" (see also Jer. xxvi. 22; xxxvi. 12).

Ver. 21.—**For me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah.** The parallel shows, "For me, and for the people, and for all Judah" (2 Kings xxii. 13), without any apparent specific reference to Israel. Our present passage may intend to glance at the fact that the better part of Israel were in captivity; and it will be possible, at any rate, to read the last clause as intending, not "for them that *are left* in Judah," but "and for them in Judah." **That is poured out;** Hebrew, נִתְּכָה. The parallel shows, "that is kindled;" Hebrew, נִצְּתָה. The considerable resemblance between the Hebrew words is worthy of passing note.

Ver. 22.—The question may suggest itself, Why was not Jeremiah (ch. xxxv. 25; xxxvi. 21) at once consulted? Probably he was at Anathoth, and not immediately accessible. **Tikvath.** In Hebrew, *Tokhath;* and in parallel, *Tikvah.* **Hasrah.** In parallel, *Harhas.* **In the college;** Revised Version, following Hebrew, *in the* (*Mishneh*) *second quarter* (see Zeph. i. 10; Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 342). Nothing is known of Huldah, nor of Shallum her husband, except what lies in this and the parallel place.

Ver. 23.—The oracular answer of Huldah, contained in this and the following five verses, is very closely paralleled by the six verses of 2 Kings xxii. 15—20.

Ver. 25.—**Poured out.** So here again, as above (ver. 21). Yet our Septuagint has "kindled;" and also the parallel in the Hebrew. The word "quenched," which immediately follows, suits the word "kindled," and what with the testimony of the Septuagint, both here and in ver. 21, and the Hebrew in both passages of the parallel, suggests that "poured" is the substitution, by some mishap, of a copyist—a mishap, for instance, that might result from the copyist writing from the speech of some one, and not from his own inspection. Exactly similar mistakes may often be seen in our maps, where the spelling and misspelling of the name of some place seem only to be accounted for by the same supposition. The catastrophe now foretold befell the nation manifestly in the reigns of the succeeding sovereigns, whose days were emphatically both few and evil, viz. the two sons of Josiah, Jehoahaz and Eliakim, whose name was changed to Jehoiakim; and the two sons of this latter, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (according to 2 Kings xxiv. 17, the same with *Mattaniah*, and son of *Josiah*).

Ver. 29.—The wise, religious, and unselfish conduct of the king is clearly betokened in the course he took, as narrated here and in the succeeding three verses.

Ver. 30.—The Levites. The parallel mentions "prophets" and omits "Levites," which latter our compiler is safe not to forget. When it is said in this verse, he read, the meaning, of course, is "the priests" read (Deut. xxxi. 9).

Ver. 31.—The king stood in his place; *i.e.* not simply in his order, but upon his royal pedestal, or platform; possibly following a mere suggestion, originating with the word used in the parallel, "by his pillar" (so Revised Version).

Ver. 32.—Some think the text here corrupt, both for the presence of the words, and in Benjamin, and the absence of the words, "in the covenant." Their case, however, is scarcely conclusive (see 2 Kings xxiii. 3).

Ver. 33.—The parallel (2 Kings xxiii. 4—20) gives some succinct account of Josiah's removal of abominations, here glanced at so briefly.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—33.—*The reign of Josiah—its unexpected boon, in a republication of revealed religion, with the legitimate and happy results following thereupon.* In the reign and person of Josiah, once more and for the last time in the now numbered years of the kingdom of Judah, the light of piety and "goodness" flickered up in the socket. His reign began when his years numbered but eight; it lasted thirty-one years. Four reigns succeeded his to the date of the destruction of Jerusalem, but the four together occupied but twenty-two or twenty-three years in all. The term of life is run, therefore, within a very short length, and the pensive sadness of the coming end falls upon us before the horrors of the end itself overwhelm us. Josiah's care for the reformation of the national religion emulated, rather exceeded, that of any predecessor (2 Kings xxiii. 22, 25). He boldly denounced and destroyed, enlisted help and spiritual sympathy, and reconstructed. And, both by word and deed, laid most solemn stress on the immaculate celebration of the sacred Passover. And explain it as we may, there was granted to him and his reign an opportunity, and it not neglected, which bid fair, going to the root of the matter, to promise brighter days—days of more lasting brightness for the welfare of the people, in the true security of religion. But the knell of doom was already clanging. To the piety of Josiah, it was not so much that respite of the dread sentence on Judah was given, but *this* was given, the condescending information and merciful assurance that it was dated to a time when he would be "gathered to his fathers, and gathered to his grave in peace, and his eyes not see all the evil" (vers. 27, 28). This, with some special emphasis, came true; for Josiah, though slain in battle, and so far not dying "in peace," did die in peace, so far as the end or captivity of Judah was concerned; and he was the last of the kings who received honourable burial in Jerusalem. Three of his successors and descendants died in captivity, and if Jehoiakim, the other of the four last kings, eventually "slept with his fathers" (2 Kings xxiv. 6), in the sense of his dust resting with theirs, it was *not so* at first (Jer. xxii. 19; xxxvi. 30; Ezek. xix. 8, 9). The remarkable opportunity already spoken of, which was granted to Josiah in the interest of religion for his nation, which came on him so unexpectedly, which made such deep impression on him, and which he endeavoured with all his might to turn to the greatest and best advantage, may be dwelt upon, in all its lasting significance, for every time of day.

The fact of the sudden discovery of "the book of the Law of the Lord by Moses" (Deut. xxxi. 26; also 10—13) loses its wonder perhaps for ourselves, as we look back on that history, as compared with the other extraordinary fact and appalling thought, that it had been lost, *so* lost that its very existence, the tradition of it, seemed as a thing unknown to Josiah. Counting the years of the reign of Manasseh, of Amon, and those which had already elapsed of Josiah, we may say that the sacred manuscript had been lost for some eighty years. In point of fact, some pious priest among the degenerate rank-and-file of the priests had probably carefully hidden it at the beginning of the iniquities of Manasseh. The wonder nevertheless is still left, that no quest of it, no literal active search for it, seems to have been made, and no perpetuation of the tradition of it even, by priest or prophet, seems to have been at hand, for Josiah to have had the opportunity of availing himself of it. It is not impossible to surmise partial explanations to meet the difficulty, but *the surprising fact* is full of significance. Practically the incident amounted to this—that to Josiah was vouchsafed some "republication of revealed religion." And his treatment of the novel, the startling message of revelation is a very parable in itself. We may for *the text* of *this* parable, to call it such, be reminded of the reputed words of "father Abraham," in our blessed Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, when he says of the five brethren of the rich man in torments, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear *them*." They had *not* heard them, *i.e.* had not practically *heeded* them. But Josiah hears and heeds. And are we not confronted very happily and very suggestively, though in very brief, with these examples of the just demands of revealed religion, justly met? viz. when we read how—

I. JOSIAH "HEARS" IT.

II. BELIEVES IT.

III. REVERENTLY FEARS IT, AS HE PERMITS IT TO SINK INTO HIS VERY SOUL, AND DOES NOT RESIST IT, NOR TRY TO DROWN IT, NOR PUT IT OFF TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AT A MORE CONVENIENT SEASON.

IV. WITH ALL URGENCY MAKES FULL INQUIRY, AND THAT IN THE RIGHT QUARTERS RESPECTING ITS FULL AND MOMENTOUS IMPORT.

V. DILIGENTLY GUIDES HIMSELF PRACTICALLY BY IT.

VI. CALLS WITH THE VOICE OF A TRUE PREACHER ALL AROUND HIM TO HEAR AND HEED THE SAME, AND WITHOUT A QUIBBLE OR DELAY TO ENTER INTO COVENANT WITH THAT GOD, WHO SO REVEALS HIMSELF, HIS TRUTH, HIS WILL, HIS COMMANDS, AND THE FEARFUL OR OTHERWISE THE AWE-INSPIRING SANCTIONS BY WHICH THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED. The rich man, the five brethren of the rich man, Judah and Israel, and countless millions upon millions of others, would have been saved and blessed had they been followers of Josiah. How many of modern days, how many of ourselves have neglected, are neglecting, and are making a mock of sin, because of neglecting the simple, faithful example of Josiah, as to *the way* to receive God's revelation of his truth and will for our lives!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3 (first part).—*Piety in youth.* That Josiah "while he was yet young . . . began to seek after the God of David his father" is to us an interesting fact; it provides an example to the young and an incentive to those who have charge of their welfare. Respecting piety in youth it is well to consider—

I. HOW MUCH THERE IS TO COMMEND IT. 1. *All life* belongs to God, and therefore *this part* of it. Unto him who gave us our existence and all our powers, and in whom we live and move and have our being, surely the whole of our life belongs; it cannot be withheld without wrong, without keeping back the "glory due to his Name," the gratitude and the love and the service due to himself. Therefore does *this* part of it along with the rest. And it is certain that when life is past and we come to have it in review we shall be most happy in the thought, if we can but cherish it, that our youth also was spent in the fear of God, in the love and service of Jesus Christ.

> "'Twill please us to look back and see
> That our *whole* lives were thine."

2. *Each period of life has its own peculiar offering* to bring. If age has its patience and submissiveness, and if elderliness has its experience, and if prime has the fulness of its strength for service, and if young manhood has its hopefulness and its ardour, then has youth also *its* especial offering to bring to its Redeemer; it has its affectionateness, its trustfulness, its docility, its readiness to obey, its beauty. Truly, the "flower when offered in the bud" *is* "no vain sacrifice." 3. *It saves the growth of injurious weeds* in the garden of the soul. When the sense of sacred obligation is absent, youth is apt to let various evil habits grow up—habits which choke much that is good, which constitute a serious drawback to Christian worth, and which require much effort and much time also for their extraction. But when the early days are spent in the service and in the friendship of Christ, his holy will being the one rule of the heart and life, such evil habits are unformed, and all the after-days are stronger and better and more beautiful for their absence. 4. *Each period in life is a stepping-stone* to the next, is a preparation for the next. We sow in youth what we reap in young manhood; as we go on our way we gather in the harvest of the thought and toil of the years that came before it. But this applies to our moral and spiritual character *more* perfectly than to anything else. How, then, can we afford to lose the great advantage of building up from the beginning? Our manhood will be much the weaker for an ill-spent youth, and much the stronger for a well-spent one. Our whole life will be greatly impoverished by the one, greatly enriched by the other. 5. Godly youth is a *source of pure and deep joy* to those whom the young should be most desirous of pleasing—to those that have loved them and served them with tenderest solicitude and unfailing devotion.

II. OUR DUTY IN REGARD TO IT. 1. To abstain most carefully from forcing it. No deadlier injury can be done to the young than *forcing* a religious habit; constraining them to affect a language and to make a profession which is unreal, which will soon break down, and which will leave the heart far less open to all heavenly influences than it would have been. 2. To encourage it in every way that is in our power; more particularly by the exhibition of a *consistent life* and the manifestation of a *loving* spirit toward them. Whom we win for ourselves we may lead to our Lord.

III. THE WISDOM AND THE DUTY OF THE YOUNG. This is to enter the service of Jesus Christ without delay. He does not require of them anything they cannot offer. He does not demand of them that they should use the language or do the work which is appropriate to other conditions; he asks them to receive him as their Divine Teacher, as their Divine Friend, as their Divine Lord. He asks them to trust, to love, to serve him to the height of their present power. This they can do; this they should do; this they will be truly and deeply wise if they do. **"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."—C.**

Ver. 12.—*Faithful work.* "And the men did the work faithfully." It became a godly King of Judah to do anything and everything that was required for the strength and beauty of the temple. For in that sacred edifice centred the religious life of the nation, and there God manifested himself as nowhere else. With us religious thought and spiritual earnestness are not thus localized; and though, after the manner as well as in the spirit of Josiah, we may concern ourselves much with the erection or the repair of some "house of the Lord," yet Christian zeal now shows itself in a hundred ways; it branches and bears fruit in all directions. There is, however, a sense in which it is *all building.* We who are at work for our Lord and for our neighbour are building up the kingdom of Christ, and, at the same time, are building up a peaceful, happy, holy community. It is probable that we have all undertaken some specific work of this kind, some ministry; that we have committed ourselves to some office which makes certain demands on our intelligence, our strength, our time. That being so, it is well that we realize the importance of "doing the work faithfully" which we have in hand.

I. WHAT CONSTITUTES FAITHFULNESS. To be faithful is clearly a very different thing from being successful. Some men are successful, as men count success, who are not faithful in the sight of God; others are faithful who are not "successful." To be faithful is to *act with rightful, earnest, patient effort* in the sphere in which our Lord has placed us. 1. Doing our work honestly, fairly, conscientiously, keeping in view the revealed will of God and the claims of men (see 2 Tim. ii. 5). 2. Acting with earnestness; not languidly and listlessly, but devotedly and energetically. 3. With patient, persevering effort; not daunted by the first nor by the fiftieth difficulty that presents itself, not silenced by clamour, not forsaking the path of holy service because prosperity seems long in coming; but calmly, patiently, thoroughly proceeding with and completing our work; holding on and bearing up until we can say, thankfully and reverently, "It is finished."

II. WHAT INDUCEMENTS WE HAVE TO BE FAITHFUL IN OUR WORK. 1. *Our Lord requires it.* "It is *required* in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. iv. 2). "Be thou faithful unto death," says the ascended Lord with commanding voice. There were "overseers," our text says, to "set forward" the work in which these artificers were engaged. We have one great Divine Overseer, who is ever looking on and taking account, desiring of us that we "do the work faithfully," and it behoves us to do *everything* we undertake, both that which does and that which does not directly belong to the affairs of his kingdom, "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." 2. By so doing we *take rank with the best* of the sons of men. Of Moses we read that "he was faithful in all his house" (Heb. iii. 2). He did not *seem* to be remarkably successful; probably in the eyes of his contemporaries he appeared positively unsuccessful. But when he lay down to die on Nebo he could feel that he had done his work faithfully. And thus with Paul. And so with the best and worthiest of our race. To be faithful in our work is to stand with the best of men. 3. Thus only can we secure the *approval of our own conscience.* But thus we shall; and how great a victory it will be to be able to feel as Paul felt when his course was run, "I have fought a good fight, . . . I have kept the faith"! 4. We shall receive a *large reward.* If we are but faithful in a few things here, we shall be rulers over many things hereafter (Matt. xxv. 21). If faithful unto death, Christ will give us "a crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10). Life in all its glorious fulness, in all its perfect blessedness, will be ours for ever.—C.

Vers. 14—28.—*The hidden treasure.* Whether this "book of the Law of the Lord" was indeed the original copy in the handwriting of Moses is a matter of sacred curiosity; but it is nothing more than that. The surprising and all but incredible thing is that Judah should have been reduced to any one copy of the "Law of the Lord." This discovery of Hilkiah and the surprise and the eagerness it occasioned speak to us of—

I. THE GUILTY NEGLIGENCE OF WHICH NATIONS AND MEN ARE CAPABLE. Judah had been concerning itself, had been "careful and troubled" about many things, but it had not thought it worth while to multiply copies of the "Law of the Lord," of its own sacred books; so negligent had it been that when one is accidentally discovered its warnings are read for the first time by its own sovereign in his manhood! Of what great and guilty negligence are we capable! We may be spending our time and strength, we may be exhausting ourselves and endangering our health and life in all kinds of unprofitable occupation, in fruitless labour or in amusement which begins and ends in itself, and all the time may be neglecting that one study or that one habit in the pursuit of which "standeth our eternal life." There are many men in Christian countries who expend their substance upon, and occupy their very life with, horses, or dogs, or guns, who do not afford even a few hours a year to the serious study of the will of God as revealed by his Son and recorded in his Word. The treasure which cannot be estimated in gold or silver lies untouched, as much buried from sight and use as if it had been hidden in some crypt of the temple. It may not be our deeds, but our negligences, that we shall most fear to face in the great day of account.

II. THE MELANCHOLY USE WE MAY MAKE OF DIVINE TRUTH. In that book of the Law of the Lord there were instructions and admonitions which, if duly heeded, would have ensured abiding peace and honour to the inhabitants of Judah. These had been waywardly and flagrantly disregarded. And now the time for employing them had well-nigh gone. What was left was the sad opportunity of verifying by bitter experience the truth of its threatenings. This was the alternative now open to Judah. Let us take care lest, by our disregard of the promises, we bring upon ourselves the warnings of the Word of God. "If we will not be ruled by the rudder, we must be ruled by the rock." If we will not take advantage of the beneficent laws and the gracious overtures of God, we must "show forth" the severity of those righteous laws which attach suffering and shame to vanity and guilt.

III. THE URGENT NEED OF KEEPING AN OPEN MIND AND A SENSITIVE SPIRIT. We are almost startled when we read of Josiah's vehemence (ver. 19). These solemn threats do not affect us in that degree. But we have to consider that he was hearing them read for the first time; to him they were new and fresh, and therefore striking and forcible. Here lies one of our great perils. Familiarity covers the truth of God with its own veil, so that we do not see what we are looking at. We want to read the words of Jesus Christ, to listen to the story of his great sacrifice, to hearken to his words of gracious invitation, *as if we had never met with them before*; we want to bring to them all the force of an unclouded intelligence, of an undulled interest. And so with the warnings as well as with the promises of Scripture.

IV. THE ATTENTION GOD PAYS TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. (Vers. 26—28.) Wrath was to be poured out upon Judah, but Josiah was to be treated mercifully because he had acted rightly. Whatever penalties are due to our country, however we may be, as we are, suffering as the members of a guilty race, we may be quite sure that God has regard to the life *we* are living, to the choice *we* are making. If *our* heart is tender, and if our will is obedient and submissive, we also shall find mercy of the Lord. God has his dealings with communities and with Churches; but his most constant relation is with men, with individual souls. "The Lord looketh upon *me*;" "Christ died for *me*;" "What wilt thou have *me* to do?" And according to our individual choice will be our destiny. "Every man must bear his own burden."—C.

Vers. 29—33.—*Communication and continuance.* Josiah's wise and devout concern, when he discovered the Word and knew more fully the will of God, was to communicate his own earnestness to others, and to secure for future years this new and good departure. He took the most natural and wise measures to attain his object. 1. He summoned all the elders in particular and all the people who could meet together, and made known to them in its fulness the truth that had been revealed to himself (vers. 29, 30). 2. He pledged all those who were with him, and who represented the nation, to continuance in the service of Jehovah (vers. 31, 32). 3. He took away the standing temptation from the path of the people. He thus made obedience easier while he made the sense of obligation firmer.

I. OUR DUTY TO COMMUNICATE DIVINE TRUTH. When we consider: 1. How essential to life and all that life includes is the familiar knowledge of the will of God. 2. How possible and how practicable it is for all who know the will of God in Jesus Christ to pass it on to others. 3. How willingly men will listen if we give them the simplest and best guarantee of our sincerity—consistency of conduct and excellency of spirit; we shall see how right and how urgent it is upon us that we should all "hold forth the Word of life," make known the goodness and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. OUR DUTY TO SECURE IT SO FAR AS LIES IN OUR POWER. The text suggests three ways of doing this. 1. Pledge ourselves to abide in its light. Josiah covenanted *for himself* to "keep his commandments . . . with all his heart . . . to perform the words . . . written in this book." That was his first, plain duty. And that is ours also; to undertake, solemnly and openly before God and his people, to walk in righteousness and in holy service; to "take the vows of the Lord" upon us. By so doing we give the strongest possible and the greatest practical encouragement to all others to come and "do likewise." 2. Induce others to enter into the same solemn undertaking. As the king with his countrymen (ver. 32), so we with our kindred and friends, with our fellow-worshippers and neighbours, should do all in our power to pledge them to the service of God. "Join us," we should say, "in taking a solemn and sacred pledge to live consciously in the presence and continuously in the service of the Divine Saviour." In every considerable company of worshippers there are those who are unpledged, but who, for their own sake and for that of others related to them, ought to be the avowed disciples of Christ. It is our sacred duty, it is our high privilege, it will prove a service rich in the best reward, to speak the encouraging and inviting word which will lead them to take this important step. 3. Remove temptation from the path of those who might not be able to resist it. This is ground on which we must exhibit both understanding and earnestness, both sagacity and self-sacrifice. There are things which may be said to be "abominations" (ver. 33) because they prove to be irresistible and ruinous temptations to some sincere disciples. In these cases, it is not enough to warn against them—we must go further than that; we must do anything and everything that is needful to get the temptation as much out of the path of our neighbours as the images which were ground to dust (ver. 4) were removed from the way of the people of Judah. We may add a fourth measure which may be suggested by the twenty-ninth verse: 4. Prevail upon our friends to come into the near presence and under the power of the truth of God; and this not (as in the text) on one particular occasion, but *frequently* and *regularly*. For much fellowship with Christ and much hearkening to his voice as he speaks to us in the sanctuary will give strength unto the soul.—C.

Vers. 1—7.—*Josiah the good.* I. HIS EARLY ACCESSION. "Josiah ['Whom Jehovah heals'] was eight years old when he began to reign" (ver. 1). Manasseh, Uzziah, and Joash had been twelve, sixteen, and seven respectively when they ascended the throne. Generally speaking, it is perilous to have greatness thrust upon one at too early an age; sometimes premature responsibility calls forth capacities that might otherwise have continued latent. Edward VI., who assumed the crown of England in his tenth year, Charles IX., who was of the same age when he was raised to the throne of France, and Kang Hi (A.D. 1661), who became Emperor of China in his seventh year, were examples of the truth here stated.

II. HIS FERVENT RELIGION. Josiah's piety was: 1. *Ancestral.* If his father Amon was not a good man, but the opposite—an insensate idolater and a hardened trangressor (ch. xxxiii. 22, 23)—his mother Jedidah, "Beloved," the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath (2 Kings xxii. 1), may have been a good woman, who, like Eunice of later times (2 Tim. i. 5), nurtured her son in the fear of Jehovah. Besides, as that son was six years of age before Manasseh died, he may have received from his aged grandfather such instructions as disposed him to the choice of the true religion of Jehovah. In any case, in him was reproduced the piety of the best sovereigns that had preceded him—in particular of Hezekiah, Jotham, Jehoshaphat, and David. 2. *Early.* "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father" (ver. 3). Youthful piety, of which Scripture furnishes numerous examples—Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 26), Abijah (1 Kings xiv. 13), Obadiah (1 Kings xviii. 12), John (Luke i. 80), Jesus (Luke ii. 52), Timothy (2 Tim. i. 5)—while beautiful in all, is specially attractive in princes. King Edward VI., besides being a good linguist, "had a particular regard for the Holy Scriptures" (Bishop Burnet). That religion which begins in youth is most likely to be permanent, and certain to be most useful. Christ commends religion to the young (Matt. vi. 33). 3. *Sincere.* (1) Earnest and active, not merely nominal and formal: "He began to seek after the God of David his father," which meant that he inquired after and practised the rites and commandments of the true religion. (2) Humble and obedient, not proud and self-willed: "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father" (ver. 2), in so far, *i.e.*, as he walked in the ways of Jehovah. (3) Persevering and thorough, not intermittent and incomplete: "He turned not aside to the right hand or to the left" (ver. 2).

III. HIS ZEALOUS REFORMATION. 1. *The period of it.* Beginning in his twelfth year of reign, *i.e.* the twentieth of his life, and terminating in his eighteenth year of reign, or the twenty-sixth of his life, it occupied six years in all (vers. 3, 8). 2. *The scene of it.* (1) Jerusalem, the metropolis of the kingdom. Reformations, like charity, should begin at home. Many would reform others who have no heart to reform themselves (Song of Sol. i. 6). (2) Judah, of which Jerusalem was the capital. Though "beginning at Jerusalem," Josiah's reformation should not end there. A good king will give his first thoughts to the improvement of himself; his second, to the improvement of his capital, where his court sits and whence his laws proceed; his third, to the improvement of his land and people; his fourth, to the improvement of cities, empires, nations beyond, as far as lies within his power. (3) The cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, in their ruins round about. A good king will extend his influence as widely as possible, and in particular strive to be helpful to those peoples in his vicinity that are less enlightened or more necessitous than himself. 3. *The manner of it.* With violence—probably hinted at in the phrase, "with their axes" (ver. 6, margin). "The reformation executed by the king was earnestly intended; it was thorough, it was comprehensive; but it was above everything violent" (Ewald, 'History of Israel,' iv. 237). This appears more distinctly from 2 Kings (xxiii. 4—20). But the extirpation of religious, no more than of political abuses, can be carried out without a degree of harshness. Privileged iniquity in Church or in state is always difficult to dislodge. 4. *The extent of it.* Judah, Jerusalem, and the Israelitish cities already mentioned were purged from high places, Asherim, images and altars (vers. 3—7). Particularly (1) the altars of the Baalim were broken down in the young king's presence, the sun-images above them being hewn down at his command (ver. 4); (2) the Asherim or "pillars and trees of Asherah" (Keil), with the graven and molten images connected with the impure worship of Astarte, were broken in pieces, and their dust (after burning) strewn upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them (ver. 4)—the Book of Kings speaking of the removal of the Asherah from the house of the Lord, and the destruction of the houses of the infamous women who wove tents for the idol (2 Kings xxiii. 6, 7); and (3) the bones of the priests who had sacrificed at the heathen shrines having first been exhumed from their graves, were burnt upon the altars at which the priests had ministered before these were destroyed.

LESSONS. 1. The beauty of early piety. 2. The excellence of Christian zeal. 3. The difficulty of executing reformations.—W.

Vers. 8—13.—*The repairing of the temple by Josiah.* I. THE COMMISSIONERS. 1. *Their names.* Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the king's secretary (ver. 15); Maaseiah the governor of the city; and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder or chronicler. 2. *Their business.* To repair the house of the Lord. This had been done two centuries before by Joash (ch. xxiv. 12), and nearly one century before by Hezekiah (ch. xxix. 12—19). During the reigns of Manasseh and Amon it had fallen into such disorder that it a third time demanded renovation. In this respect the temple was a melancholy symbol of all human institutions—not excepting such as are religious—which constantly exhibit a tendency as they grow old to become degenerate, and, as a consequence stand in need of periodic reformation and rejuvenescence. 3. *Their procedure.* Along with Hilkiah the priest—as Joash had acted in concert with Jehoiada, and the king's scribe had co-operated with the high priest's officer (ch. xxiv. 11, 12)—they received the money which the Levites that kept the temple doors had collected from the people of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and from the inhabitants of all Judah and Benjamin, who, following the plan in vogue since the days of Joash and Jehoiada, cast in their free-will offerings into a box placed in the temple court for the purpose of receiving the voluntary contributions of the faithful towards the good end the king had in view, the repairing of the temple. Having received this money, the three commissioners, along with the high priest, paid it over to the superintendents who had the oversight of the house of the Lord.

II. THE OVERSEERS. 1. *Their names.* (1) Jahath and Obadiah, two Levites of the family of Merari; (2) Zechariah and Meshullam, two Levites of the house of Kohath; and (3) others unnamed, but specified as "Levites, all that could skill of instruments of music" (ver. 12). 2. *Their duties.* (1) To exercise supervision over the workmen, over the bearers of burdens, and all that wrought in any manner of service (ver. 13), over the carpenters, builders, and other artisans engaged in the undertaking (ver. 11). (2) To set forward the work (ver. 12), or "to preside over it" (margin). (3) Perhaps also to do both, *i.e.* incite and cheer the workmen, and so prosper the work, by music and song (Bertheau). "Orpheus and Amphion, by their music, moved the workmen to diligence and activity, and lessened and alleviated their toil. May we not suppose, then, that skilful musicians among the Levites did exercise their art among the workmen who were employed in the repairs of the house of the Lord?" (Adam Clarke). (4) To distribute the moneys received from the commissioners to the different tradesmen that these might procure the necessary materials for the building (vers. 10, 11).

III. THE ARTISANS. 1. *Carpenters*, or workers in wood, whose business was to prepare timber for couplings and to make beams for the houses, *i.e.* for the temple and its courts, which the kings of Judah had permitted to fall into decay. 2. *Masons*, or workers in stone; not to hew, since the stones were already hewn when purchased, but to build—in this perhaps designedly following the example given in the building of the temple (1 Kings vi. 7).

IV. THE ASSISTANTS. 1. *Scribes*, who kept a record of the progress of, as well as the necessary accounts connected with, the work. 2. *Officers*, who served in different capacities under superiors. 3. *Porters*, who watched at the several gates of the temple while the work was going on.

LESSONS. 1. The beauty of order. 2. The efficiency secured by division of labour. 3. The value of co-operation.—W.

Vers. 14—28.—*The book of the Law.* I. THE FINDING OF THE BOOK. (Vers. 14, 15.) 1. *The finder.* Hilkiah the priest (ver. 18), the high priest (ver. 9), the son of Shallum (1 Chron. vi. 13), the son of Zadok; not to be identified with either the father of Jeremiah (Jer. i. 1) or the father of Gemariah (Jer. xxix. 3); and certainly to be distinguished from the father of Eliakim, Hezekiah's house-steward (Isa. xxii. 20). 2. *The place.* The temple (ver. 15), though in what part is not stated (ver. 14); perhaps the treasure-chest out of which Hilkiah was fetching gold to make cups and other vessels (Josephus, 'Ant.,' x. 4. 2), but more probably the vicinity of the ark in the holy of holies. 3. *The time.* The eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, when he was in the middle of his reformation work (ver. 8), and just before the celebration of the Passover (ch. xxxv. 1)—a circumstance calculated to suggest the presence of God's finger in the opportune discovery of a book which exercised so powerful an influence upon the religious life of the nation at this critical juncture in its history; though the same circumstance has been used (Wellhausen, Kuenen, Ewald, Colenso, R. Smith, Cheyne) to support the theory that the book was now or shortly before for the first time written, by either Hilkiah himself, Jeremiah, or some other unknown prophet, as the legislative programme of the reforming party. 4. *The book.* (1) Deuteronomy alone (De Wette, Bohlen, Kuenen, etc.), or the original kernel thereof (Cheyne); maintained chiefly on these grounds: (*a*) The title of the book—"the book of the Law" (ver. 15), "a book of the Law of the Lord" (ver. 14)—a designation which appears to be reserved for the fifth alone of the so-called Mosaic books (Deut. xxviii. 61; xxx. 10; xxxi. 26). But it is likewise styled "the book of the covenant" (ver. 30); and this phrase occurs only in the second of the Pentateuchal books (Exod. xxiv. 7). Whence, by parity of reasoning, the book found must have been the Book of Exodus alone. The probability, however, is, that the volume contained both the second and the fifth books of Moses; in other words, that it was the whole Pentateuch. (*b*) The size of the book. As Shaphan is said to have read it through at a sitting (ver. 18), it is hardly likely to have been the whole Pentateuch, but may have been Deuteronomy. But the revised translation, "therein" (ver. 8), has deprived this of the force it was formerly supposed to possess as an argument. (*c*) The teaching of the book. The principle of Josiah's reformation, which it is argued was based upon the book—the principle, viz., of the abolition of local sanctuaries and the centralization of worship in the temple at Jerusalem—corresponds exactly with the legislation of the Deuteronomic code, which declares the law of one central altar, and forbids the erection of local sanctuaries (Deut. xii. 5—8). This, however, may be conceded without holding that Hilkiah's Law-book contained nothing but Deuteronomy or the original draft thereof—unless, indeed, it be assumed that Deuteronomy was only then for the first time written—against which stands the fact that the law of the king (Deut. xvii. 18) appears to have been known and observed in the days of Jehoiada and Joash (ch. xxiii. 11; 2 Kings xi. 12). Besides, it is too readily assumed that Josiah had no knowledge of the sinfulness of local sanctuaries and the imperative obligation of a central altar until he heard Hilkiah's book read, and that from the hearing of that book he derived his impulse to destroy the heathen altars in Jerusalem, Judah, and certain cities of Israel. As to the first, if Josiah had no acquaintance with the law of one altar, it would seem that Hezekiah had (2 Kings xviii. 4—6); while, with reference to the second, the Book of Kings indeed adopts the view here stated; but the Chronicler represents the finding of the book as having taken place after the purgation of the land (ver. 8). (*d*) The style of the book. On the ground of certain linguistic resemblances between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, it is argued that the former must have been Hilkiah's book, and composed about Josiah's time. But this reasoning is not good. As Hilkiah's book contained Deuteronomy, whatever else it contained, it would most likely make on Jeremiah, as on Josiah, a deep impression, which would reflect itself upon his own writings. Hence, from mere verbal correspondences, it cannot be inferred that Deuteronomy was not written till the age of Josiah; and if this position be abandoned, it will not be necessary to maintain that Hilkiah's book was only the last of the (so-called) books of Moses. (2) The entire Pentateuch (Keil, Bähr, Havernick, and others). Besides being borne out by the failure to establish the preceding alternative, this opinion is confirmed by the facts that the book was found in the temple by the high priest; that it is stated to have been "by Moses;" that it was recognized as such by Hilkiah, Shaphan, and Josiah; and that it made a profound impression on them all. (*a*) The fact that "it was a common practice of Egyptian scribes to insert in their transcripts of great religious or scientific works a statement that the writing in question had been 'found' in a temple," hardly warrants the suggestion that Deut. xxxi. 6 was "an imitation of this custom," or that Hilkiah's book "was not lost by accident, nor yet placed in the sanctuary with the intention to deceive, but simply taken to the temple and formally placed there, and then communicated to Josiah with a view to its promulgation" (Cheyne, 'Jeremiah: his Life and Times,' p. 85). (*b*) The phrase, "by Moses," is not sufficiently explained by saying that the author meant that Moses, had he been alive, would have so written (ibid., p. 78). (*c*) It is difficult to perceive why Hilkiah, Shaphan, and Josiah should have given out that the work was by Moses, if they really knew that it was not, but was merely an "imitation" of the great lawgiver. (*d*) It is too much to ask any but the credulous to believe that Josiah was not acting a part in pretending to be impressed by the contents of the book, if he knew it was not by the lawgiver, but by an unknown and recent author. That it was the autograph copy of the lawgiver's work (Kennicott) is an unverifiable surmise; that it was "the three middle books of the Pentateuch" (Bertheau) or only the second (Gramberg) does not seem likely.

II. THE READING OF THE BOOK. (Vers. 18, 19.) 1. *The reader.* Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah (ver. 8), the son of Meshullam (2 Kings xxii. 3), one of Josiah's commissioners for the repairing of the temple. 2. *The auditor.* Josiah (ver. 18), to whom Shaphan carried the book in obedience to Hilkiah's instructions. 3. *The lesson.* "It" or "in it" (Revised Version). Not necessarily the whole book, but only portions of it, as *e.g.* those containing the curses against disobedience (Deut. xxvii.—xxxi.; Lev. xxvi. 14—46), warnings against idolatry (Lev. xxvi. 1—30; Deut. iv. 15; xxvii. 15), and perhaps also the directions relating to the observance of the Passover (Exod. xii.) and the making of a covenant (Exod. xxiv.). 4. *The impression.* Josiah rent his clothes (ver. 19). (1) In astonishment (cf. Gen. xxxvii. 29; xliv 13) at the teaching rather than at the finding of the book. Many persons still would be surprised at the contents of the Bible if they only read it. The Bible is often rejected by those who are entirely ignorant of it. (2) In self-abasement (ver. 27), as an acknowledgment in outward action of the sense he had of his own and his people's shortcomings (cf. Numb. xiv. 6; 2 Sam. iii. 31), in respect of both their idolatries and their continued maintenance of local sanctuaries—an acknowledgment the sincerity of which was attested by the tears with which it was accompanied (ver. 27). So does no reading of the Bible accomplish its highest aim or produce its best effect unless it humbles the hearer before God, and causes him to weep for his sins (Job xlii. 5, 6; Ps. xxxviii. 18; Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; 2 Cor. vii. 9—11).

III. THE INQUIRING ABOUT THE BOOK. (Vers. 21—28.) Done at Josiah's instance. 1. *The reason of this inquiry.* The terror in which the king was about the wrath of Jehovah against himself and people on account of the failure of their fathers to do after all that was written in the book. Josiah recognized the solidarity of the race, according to which the proverb held good, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. xviii. 2). Besides, Josiah must have known the reforming zeal of the people was at best but superficial (Jer. iii. 10). Hence, though the land and the house had been purged, he was uncertain whether the curses denounced against idolatry might not still overtake them. It is good when "the terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 11) persuades men to inquire about escaping from the wrath to come. 2. *The quarter at which this inquiry was made.* (1) Jehovah. "Inquire of the Lord for me" (ver. 21). God is the only Being competent to direct how man may escape the infliction of Divine wrath on account of sin. Schemes of salvation only of man's devising are of no value. Salvation, in its conception, inception, conduction, and perfection, belongeth unto God (Ps. iii. 8; xxxvii. 39; Isa. xliii. 11; Jer. iii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 3). The soul that would be saved must apply to him (Isa. xlv. 22; Amos v. 4; John iii. 16; Rom. iii. 22—30; 1 John v. 11). (2) Huldah the prophetess —a title given to Miriam (Exod. xv. 20) and Deborah (Judg. iv. 4)—the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrath, keeper of the wardrobe, who dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter (ver. 22), *i.e.* of the city, probably the "other city" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xv. 11. 5), situated on the hill Acra. That the king sent not to Jeremiah may be explained by supposing Jeremiah was not then in Jerusalem, but at Anathoth (Kimchi); that he sent to Huldah shows he recognized the necessity as well as propriety of consulting God through his appointed media of communication. Not even under the gospel can God be approached directly (John i. 18), but only through Christ (John xiv. 6), the Prophet like unto Moses (Deut. xviii. 15; Acts iii. 22), and yet greater than all prophets by so much as a son is greater than a servant (Heb. i. 1; iii. 5, 6). 3. *The persons through whom this inquiry was made.* The deputation sent by the king consisted of five individuals, most likely all high officials connected with his court. (1) Hilkiah the priest; (2) Ahikam the son of Shaphan (not the scribe), afterwards the friend and patron of Jeremiah (Jer. xxvi. 24; xxxix. 14), and father of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed deputy-governor of the land after the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kings xxv. 22; Jer. xl. 5); (3) Abdon the son of Micah —Achbor (2 Kings xxii. 12), probably the correct reading (see Jer. xxvi. 22; xxxvi. 12)—whose son Elnathan was afterwards one of Jehoiakim's and Zedekiah's courtiers; (4) Shaphan the scribe, or king's secretary; and (5) Asaiah the king's servant. The centurion of Capernaum sent a deputation to entreat the help of Christ, whom he regarded as a Prophet (Luke vii. 3). No intermediaries are required by such as would consult him whom the Father hath appointed the one Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. ii. 5). 4. *The answer returned to this inquiry.* (1) Concerning the city and the temple a sentence of doom (ver. 24). The inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem had provoked Jehovah to anger by their senseless and shameful idolatries, had turned a deaf ear to the warnings of Jehovah's prophets, had not even profited by the judgment already fallen on the northern kingdom, and had terribly abused the privileges they had enjoyed and the patience that had been exercised towards them. Their day of grace was past. The night of doom was at hand (ver. 25). Had Josiah consulted Jeremiah, the reply would in all probability have been similar (Jer. v.). Of corresponding severity is the sentence pronounced by Christ upon them who love the darkness rather than the light, who adhere to sinful ways in spite of his calls to repentance, who despise his offered mercy and trample on his laws (Matt. xxi. 41; xxiv. 51; John v. 29; Rom. i. 18; Eph. v. 6; 1 Pet. iii. 12; Jude 13). (2) Concerning the king, a message of grace (ver. 27). The ground of it, Josiah's repentance; the substance of it, Josiah's deliverance. In the gospel repentance and salvation are always conjoined. Repentance a condition of salvation (Matt. iv. 17; Mark vi. 12; Luke xxiv. 37; Acts ii. 38); salvation a consequent of repentance (Luke xv. 7; xviii. 13, 14; 1 John i. 9).

Learn: 1. The inspiration of Scriptures. 2. The profitableness of Scripture-reading. 3. The testimony of conscience to the Word of God. 4. The certainty of God's anger against sin. 5. The blessedness of sincere mourning on account of sin. 6. The mercifulness of God in the providential preservation of his Word. 7. The certainty that God never loses sight of the Bible, though man often does.—W.

Ver. 30.—*The value of the Bible.* I. THE BIBLE LOST. An unspeakable calamity. 1. *To literature.* Remark on the indebtedness of modern literature to the Bible. 2. *To religion.* Without the support and quickening derived from Scripture religion would speedily become languid. 3. *To morality.* Contrast in respect of morality countries possessing and countries lacking the Bible.

II. THE BIBLE FOUND. A great mercy. More to be prized than the discovery of gold-mines, which can only contribute to man's material wealth, or even of rare manuscripts by human authors, which enrich chiefly the intellect, the finding of the Bible by an individual or a nation for the first time, or the recovery of it after it has been for some time lost, is: 1. *An occasion of great joy,* and is usually felt to be such. Witness the gladness of Luther at finding the Bible in the convent at Erfurth. And ought to be: 2. *A reason for special thankfulness*, as it generally is to all who know its value as a revelation of Divine wisdom and love, and can appreciate its power to influence the hearts and lives of men.

III. The Bible read. A blessed privilege. 1. *Many might read the Bible who do not have it.* A sad deprivation. This the case of the heathen generally and of numbers at home. An argument for missions. 2. *Many have the Bible, yet do not read it.* A grievous sin. This the case with thousands in Christendom to whom God's Word is a strange book. An argument for preaching. 3. *Many have the Bible, but cannot read it.* A pitiful condition. This the case of those who through defective education or blindness are unable to read. An argument for Christian philanthropy. 4. *Many have the Bible and read it.* A happy experience. This the case of those who have learnt to recognize in the Bible God's Word, and to appreciate its suitability to their soul's needs. An argument for the inspiration of the Scriptures.

IV. The Bible obeyed. An indispensable duty. 1. *Obedience the end and aim of the Bible.* The Bible not written for information merely, but for direction also. Designed not simply for the construction of creeds, but likewise for the regulation of conduct (Matt. vi. 24; Jas. i. 22). 2. *Obedience the only homage acceptable to the Bible.* To read it, admire its literary beauty, study its theology, extol its excellences, circulate it, are good if these acts are accompanied by obedience, but if not they are comparatively worthless. 3. *Obedience the best witness to the Divinity of the Bible.* "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John vii. 17). Those who know the Bible best, by giving practical obedience to its precepts are most fully convinced of its heavenly and supernatural origin. 4. *Obedience the necessary means for obtaining the blessing of the Bible.* Not the hearers of the Word, but the doers thereof, are justified before God (Matt. vii. 21; Luke xi. 28; Rom. ii. 13).—W.

Vers. 29—33.—*Judah's last national covenant.* I. The circumstances. 1. *The time.* (1) In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, or in Josiah's twenty-sixth year; not so early as the covenant made by Asa in the fifteenth year of his reign (ch. xv. 10), or as that made by Jehoiada in the first year of Joash's reign (ch. xxiii. 16), or as that projected by Hezekiah also in the first year of his reign (ch. xxix. 10). But better late than never. (2) After the purgation of the land and the house. It is necessary as well as fitting that works of repentance and reformation should be followed up by resolutions after new obedience, that the casting out of false gods should be supplemented by the bringing in of the true God, that "ceasing to do evil" should be accompanied by "learning to do well" (Isa. i. 16, 17). (3) While Josiah was under the devout impressions produced by the reading of the book of the Law. Seasons when the heart is affected by a sense of God's nearness or a conviction of its own sinfulness should be improved by drawing closer its relations to God (2 Cor. vii. 11). 2. *The place.* (1) The city of Jerusalem, which had been swept clean from its idolatries—an indispensable preliminary to meeting with God. (2) The temple on Moriah, where Jehovah had set his Name. They who would have dealings with a God of grace must seek him at the times, in the places, and by the ways he himself has appointed.

II. The parties. 1. *The king.* As was most appropriate, Josiah led the way. Though sovereigns have no right under the gospel to enforce religion on their subjects, they may nevertheless, by means of personal example, persuade their subjects to embrace religion. 2. *The elders.* These were the heads of the houses, and therefore the representatives of the inhabitants both of Judah and Jerusalem. Unless the chiefs in a state and the fathers in a family precede, it is not likely the inferiors in the former or the children in the latter will follow after in the paths of piety. 3. *The priests and Levites.* Instead of "the Levites," 2 Kings (xxiii. 2) reads "prophets," which has been explained by supposing that the prophets, among whom probably were Jeremiah, Baruch, Zephaniah, and Urijah, belonged to priestly and Levitical families, or that they were Levites whose duty it was to preach and to interpret the Law (ch. xvii. 8, 9; cf. Deut. xvii. 18; xxxi. 9; xxxiii. 10). Those who ascribe it to an error of the pen are uncertain whether that error should be charged against the author of the Kings (Keil) or against the Chronicler (Bertheau). 4. *The people.* Great and small—the people of distinction and the lower classes, perhaps also the grown-up persons and the children

—were assembled as participants in this high transaction (cf. ch. xv. 13; Deut. i. 17).

III. THE PRELIMINARIES. 1. *The reading of the book of the covenant.* The part read most likely included Exod. xxiv., the readers being, not the king himself (Adam Clarke), but others, presumably Shaphan, Hilkiah, Jeremiah, etc. The reading was "in their ears," from which may be inferred that it was audible and distinct. 2. *The standing of the king in his place.* This was the platform beside the brazen altar, upon which the sovereign was accustomed to stand in high religious and national ceremonies (ch. vi. 13; xxiii. 13).

IV. THE ENGAGEMENTS. 1. *To walk after the Lord.* The common phrase for observing the worship of Jehovah (ch. xi. 17; 2 Kings xvii. 8; xxi. 22; Micah iv. 5; vi. 16). Distinguish the similar phrases, "to walk before God" (ch. vi. 14; Gen. xvii. 1), and "to walk with God" (Gen. v. 24). The ideas in the first are perhaps those of imitation and obedience; in the second, those of sincerity and purity; in the third, those of communion and concord. 2. *To keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes.* Explanatory of the foregoing; to walk after Jehovah, signifying to keep his commandments, etc. The three terms—commandments, testimonies, statutes—occasionally occur together or in contiguity (Ps. xix. 7, 8; cxix. 21, 22, 23), and though etymologically distinguishable, are practically synonymous. They are employed here perhaps for variety, but chiefly for emphasis (Eccles. iv. 12). The obedience required by Jehovah and promised by the people was not formal and superficial, but earnest and sincere—"with all the heart, and with all the soul." God for Christ's sake may accept less, but for his own sake he never can demand less, while God's people and Christ's should strive never to present less. 3. *To perform the words of the covenant written in the book of the Law.* The ultimate standard of duty for king and people was to be the words of the book, and neither the opinions of others nor the imaginations of themselves. So for Christians the supreme rule of faith and practice is the Holy Scriptures.

V. THE RESULTS. 1. *The people assented to the covenant.* At the king's command—whether with perfect free-will (2 Kings xxiii. 3) is not clear—they bound themselves to its observance (ver. 32). Without the concurrence of the will there can be no true religious service. 2. *The king purged the land of Israel from abominations.* He allowed no external observance of idolatry. To cleanse the hearts of his people from idol-worship was beyond his power. Human enactments, by whatever power promulgated, can only effect external reformation; the regeneration of the heart and renewal of the mind are competent to God alone. 3. *The nation kept true to the covenant while Josiah lived.* The practice of idolatry had been suppressed, but the spirit of idolatry had not been killed. After Josiah's death it again raised its head (ch. xxxvi. 5; 2 Kings xxiii. 32), as it had frequently done before after periods of reformation.

LESSONS. 1. The Word of God the supreme directory to a Christian both for faith and practice. 2. The prime duty of man to keep God's commandments and testimonies. 3. The highest evidence of piety in either individual or nation is holiness.—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXV.

This chapter of twenty-seven verses, occupied with the account of Josiah's great Passover (vers. 1—19), and his death in the battle of Megiddo, waged by Necho King of Egypt with "Carchemish by Euphrates" (vers. 20—27), is paralleled by the ten verses of 2 Kings xxiii. 21—30.

Ver. 1.—They killed the Passover on the fourteenth . . . of the first month; *i.e.* on the day appointed originally (Exod. xii. 6). It will be remembered that, under special circumstances, the same day of the *second* month was authorized by "Hezekiah and his princes" (ch. xxx. 2).

Ver. 2.—Comp. ch. vii. 6; xxxi. 2; 1 Chron. xxiii. 32; and our notes in those places.

Ver. 3.—That taught (see ch. xvii. 7, 9; Deut. xxxiii. 8—10). **Which were holy** (see ch. xxiii. 6). **Put the holy ark . . . not to you a burden on the shoulder.** There is a double difficulty, though not of a very formidable character, in this portion of the verse. We can only conjecture why the ark was not in its proper place, probably having been temporarily removed during

Josiah's own restorations, or possibly having never been yet replaced from the date of some earlier removal of an iniquitous character and on the part of an iniquitous king. Secondly, as to the burden, some would explain the language as a *reminiscence* of the general and ever-applicable principle found in 1 Chron. xxiii. 26. This, at any rate, would seem rather more satisfactory than the suggestion conveyed by the italic type of our Authorized Version. Perhaps the explanation may rather be that the ark had latterly again and again been shifted, and Josiah wishes to protest that neither for one reason nor another shall it be again moved.

Ver. 4.—**According to the writing of David . . . and . . . of Solomon** (comp. our ch. viii. 14 and 1 Chron. ix. 10—34, and the other marginal references, 1 Chron. xxiii.—xxvi.). It is more than possible that the fullest tabulation of arrangements of this kind has not come down to us.

Ver. 5.—In brief, this verse purports to say that, for this special occasion of the Passover, the Levites shall take special care that, as stationed in the holy precincts, there shall be a family of themselves ready to minister to a family . . . of the people, each to each.

Ver. 6.—**Prepare your brethren**; *i.e.* as betokened by the wording of the foregoing verse, their brethren, the *people*. The Levites were to purify *themselves*, perform their other duties of killing the victims, and withal to use their opportunities of instructing the people to the better order and performance of the whole solemn service.

Ver. 7.—**Lambs . . . kids . . . bullocks.** The variety of sacrificial offerings is specifically noticed in our ver. 13. While *kids* ("Ye shall take it out from the sheep *or from the goats*," Exod. xii. 5) as well as *lambs* answered for the Paschal feast, the *bullocks* served for "burnt" and "peace offerings" (Numb. xxviii. 16—25).

Ver. 8.—**The princes**; *i.e.* the three immediately mentioned by name. **Jehiel** (see Ezra viii. 2).

Ver. 9.—**Conaniah . . . Shemaiah . . . Jozabad** (see ch. xxxi. 12, 15).

Ver. 10.—**According to the king's commandment** (see ch. xxx. 16, where the sanction is referred further back, "according to the Law of Moses, the man of God").

Ver. 11.—Comp. ch. xxix. 34; xxx. 16; Lev. i., iii., iv., *passim*.

Ver. 12.—**Removed**; *i.e.* cut off; the verse purporting that those who officiated *cut off* those portions of the animals slain which were of the nature of burnt offering, that they might be taken by the offering worshippers to the priests at the altars, there to be entirely consumed. **Of the people**; probably better, literally, *to the children of the people*, i.e. "to the people" (Lev. iii. 3—16).

Ver. 13.—**Roasted.** (For the emphatic and repeated command to roast, see Exod. xii. 8, 9; Deut. xvi. 7.) **Sod.** The sodden or *boiled* offerings, peace offerings, were ordinarily eaten on the days of unleavened bread, and then particularly on the first and seventh (Lev. xxiii. 4—8, etc.). **Divided them speedily among all the people.** The marginal rendering of the original, and the Revised Version rendering, *carried them quickly*, may be noted; nevertheless attention is invited, probably not so much to the speed or quickness in question, but to the fact that "*all* the people" were carefully attended to.

Ver. 15.—To the marginal references of 1 Chron. xxv.; ix.; xxvi.; add ch. vi. 33—47.

Ver. 16.—**The same day**; literally, *that day*, as next verse, "at *that* time." No stress belongs to the day as the same day evidently.

Ver. 18.—Upon this verse Professor Murphy says, "The Passover in Hezekiah's time was great (ch. xxx. 26), but this was greater. For it was kept on the proper day in the first month, and was not a mere supplementary Passover; it was observed with due regularity, and not by worshippers some of whom were unclean; and if we allow thirteen persons for each lamb or kid, there were upwards of half a million communicants; while, so far as we know, there were only seventeen thousand sheep presented by Hezekiah and his princes (ch. xxx. 24), which would not supply more than half the number of partakers."

Ver. 19.—The date is stamped as ever-memorable, ever-honourable landmark in Josiah's reign.

Ver. 20.—**After all this.** A period of about thirteen years of happy retrospect is now the portion of the good king. This period brings itself to an unhappy and even fatal termination in the year B.C. 608; when, as it would appear by the result, King Josiah did wrong, and went out of his way, in opposing the march of Pharaoh-Necho (who reigned B.C. 611—595), successor of Psammetichus King of Egypt, against Cyaxares (the monarch who, with Nabopolassar, had taken Nineveh, B.C. 625) King of Assyria (2 Kings xxiii. 29), or King of Babylon at *Circesium on the River Phrat*, the head-quarters now of the united Assyrian and Babylonian power. Where the fault or sin of Josiah lay—whether he ran before he was sent, or whether, according to our following two verses, he set out *against* the Divine word by Necho—is certainly a question left in obscurity. Nothing is said in our history or its parallel to accredit the tale of Necho, or to discredit the heart and motive of Josiah—nothing *except* what silence and the result *seem* to say. One other element of interest and of difficulty may be added to the question; for of the thirteen years' interval, which we have described above as one presumably of happy retrospect in certain aspects for Josiah, we know nothing from Scripture, but have every reason to suppose that during it Josiah and his kingdom had become subject, if only nominally, to Nabopolassar; so that, in offering to resist Necho of Egypt, he was offering to strengthen so far forth the royal line which did dishonour to his own country and his country's God. Upon this supposition, however, we can lay no stress.

Ver. 21.—Not against thee this day. Possibly the suggestion couched in these last two words may have been the opposite of agreeable to King Josiah. **For God commanded me to make haste.** The margin reading of the Revised Version seems preferable, both for the Hebrew text and the connection, *hath given command to speed me.*

Ver. 22.—Would not turn his face (so ch. xxv. 17 and its parallel, 2 Kings xiv. 8). **Disguised himself.** This is, possibly enough, the intention of the word, but it is more probable that the simple meaning is *fully armed himself.* The Septuagint has *strengthened himself.* **Hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God.** Unless these words are intended to convey really their patent and most natural import, it is tenfold strange that they should find a place in the compilation of the Chronicles. It is indeed possible that they might purport, from the pen of the writer of Chronicles, that in point of fact the words of Necho had been the permitted warning, though not the actually dictated language of God. The genius of the whole passage strongly reminds us of ch. xxv. 17, 19—21; and its parallel in 2 Kings xiv **In the valley of Megiddo**; *i.e.* among those hills which separate the country of the coast from Esdraelon—a valley as that "of Kishon" (see Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 336, 339, 347; but see also Conder's 'Handbook,' p. 287, where a different view is taken).

Ver. 24.—And he died. If the form of words used in the parallel, 2 Kings xxiii. 30, be followed, Josiah was dead before they reached Jerusalem. **And all . . . mourned for Josiah.** We still find no note whatever of blame attributed to Josiah, and the general mourning (Zech. xii. 11) appears to have been most genuine.

Ver. 25.—If Jeremiah's lamenting on this occasion was one committed to writing, it has not survived. **To this day**; *i.e.* probably *anniversary* after anniversary to the time of the writer to whom this statement belongs, the authority from which our compiler draws his materials. **Written in the lamentations.** We have here another glimpse of a work which has not been handed down to us.

Ver. 26.—Goodness; Hebrew text, *kindnesses.* **According to that . . . written in the Law.** This sentence pictures Josiah a careful, loving student of the Word, to the end that he might become a "doer" of it.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—19.—*The solemn celebration of the Passover.* (For the homiletics of this passage, or the subject of it, see those written on ch. xxx.)

Vers. 20—27.—*The lamentations for Josiah's death.* Some cloud of mystery, but, so far as we can see, none of shame, hangs over the closing events of Josiah's reign and life. His determined resolution to oppose Necho King of Egypt, when he came to "Charchemish by Euphrates," with the view of engaging in battle with the forces of Babylon or Assyria, had no doubt some strong motive. It is not at all impossible to imagine and even to assign some alternative motives as those most probably at work. One element in the obscurity concerns the question—What was *the* operating and determining reason? The larger source of difficulty, however, lies in the obscurity surrounding the question whether any blame whatsoever attached to Josiah for his immovable resolution. That he paid no heed to the representations and remonstrances of the King of Egypt, as that king made very free use, but by no means necessarily equally intelligent and religious use, of the name of *God*, was very natural, and surely diplomatically justifiable. We can, meantime, find nowhere any reflection passed on Josiah for neglecting the pretended anxious warning of Necho, which may be construed to mean all anxiety for *himself* only. No condemnation of Josiah's conduct is written on the page of Scripture, either before or after his death, in connection with this subject. And, lastly, the allusions which the writings of the prophets contain (Jer. xxii. 10, 18; xxxiv. 5; Zech. xii. 11) are not only equally clear of any suspicion of reflecting blame upon him, but also are of the most touching, tender, and sympathetic character. The probability seems to be that, after the earnest, religious work of Josiah to the date of the Passover, special and solemn celebration (in "the eighteenth year of his reign," and twenty-seventh of his life), with its last effort to bring in the hapless remnant of Israel also, and after the lapse of another period of some thirteen years, the doings of which, on the part of Josiah, are nowhere recorded, he is to be permitted, before the sad plot thickens, to be "taken away from the evil to come;" and as his life was by no means in the sere and yellow leaf, the *method* of his departure shall be ordained mercifully—*not* one of sickness, or stricken plague, or ignominious "accident," but in the honourable risk and challenge of battle. Occasion may be taken here to consider the mingled mysteries and mercies that mark the Divine methods of summoning men from this present life, the methods of him whose wisdom is unchallengeable, whose ways are so often a profound deep, but of whom this may ever be recorded as comforting certainty, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." The phenomenon before us is that of a good man and a good king, placed at a most remarkable juncture of history; one, indeed, without the possibility of an exact parallel, who has served his day and generation and his God with singular fidelity amid circumstances of singular difficulty. He is the last true king, and the short following of his descendants and his successors on the throne are not in any degree the inheritors of his virtues and goodness. He has made one more, one last protest for his God and against that idolatry of his nation which has cankered to the very heart its religious and its national health. Such a stand he has boldly and for a year successfully made; but he has been told, and doubtless has seen, that all was too late, and that the tide could not be turned. He is but thirty-nine years of age. And the *appearance* is as of a man rushing on his fate. But there is *no* appearance of recklessness or of intemperateness. He does not sport nor gamble away his life; and if in any partial aspect it *looks* for a moment like a gratuitous hazarding, it cannot be said to come of any of the ordinary impulses in any such cases. It is not for self, for sense, for sin; not for the gratification of any of these; and, meantime, it is not plain for *what* it is! It is the parable of providence—a parable by no means unfamiliar to us; known, indeed, to many an age, many a nation, many a family, and full of silent, deep, useful lesson and suggestion. It teaches—

I. THAT WHAT WE KNOW AS DEATH IS NOT EXTINCTION OF LIFE. Let alone whatever else, what it *simply* and by itself means is the merging of one cycle of existence in another; the removal of life from one school of knowledge to another; the shifting of it from one sphere of activity to another. All the living force and excellence and virtue of Josiah are not quenched, cannot be merely thrown away; and if in one sense broken in twain—though all the analogies of sense must here in this very respect fail—*only* in one sense. Such a death at such a time of present life, under such circumstances, is one of the strongest moral persuasives—a source of moral conviction irresistible as to what death is.

II. THE THING CALLED DEATH, IN ITSELF, ASKS ABSOLUTELY MORE THAN ANY OTHER OF THE FACTS OF LIFE, THE THING CALLED FAITH. It is itself a fact of life—the last fact of the series known here. To be understood rightly, and to be used rightly, and to yield anything like its full fruit of advantage, it demands to be "mixed with faith" more than any preceding fact of life. Therefore it is that sometimes it actually gives birth to faith, sometimes greatly strengthens it, or, lastly, supposing it is absolutely wanting, condemns the forlorn mourner to *utter* darkness.

III. THE METHODS OF DEATH OFTEN SERVE, EVEN BEYOND THE FACT ITSELF, TO SURPRISE, TO STARTLE INTO EXISTENCE A WONDER THAT WILL NOT REST. That irrepressible and often agonized wonder assists to tear open the eye of flesh and sense, and operates to find deep within, or deep behind, the dormant but now struggling germ of other and more real vision. Sorrow, grief, and wonder are three of the greatest moral forces of our nature, and their agonized unanswered questions avail to sound some of the deeper depths of that nature. The mystery of death is one thing, but the mysteries of the methods of death—the victims of death, the apparently capricious or arbitrary action of death in those taken—of youth and excellence and usefulness, in the height of their service to the world, and where heads and hearts are, in consequence, literally mowed down in widest sweep and circles—are other things. It is, indeed, sometimes not impossible to imagine the gain to those who go; but what a wrecked scene for all that is left behind—with work that must be abandoned, schemes that must be abortive, hopes that must be dashed to the ground—a widespread field of desolation and devastation! For the whole scene there is one refuge. It is one which postulates, for its highest safety and adequacy, not merely the existence and presence of faith, but faith of overcoming and dominant quality. Wanting this, which so uniformly is wanting, it may yet be that faith learns life, and lifts itself to bud and to begin to unfold its buds.

IV. THOUGH DEATH IS SUCH A VIGOROUS AND RELENTLESS BIDDER FOR FAITH, BOTH IN ITSELF AND IN ITS CIRCUMSTANCE, YET IT DOES ALSO INFER SOME VERY CERTAIN PRESENT USE AND SIGNIFICANCE. In every case, for instance, of deep sorrow and sincere expression of it in "lamentation," what (comparatively speaking) healthy action of living hearts is betokened, and what a pure tribute of unharmful and direct honour is rendered to the vanished goodness! Upon this ancient sorrow, so far removed from ourselves, of "all Judah and Jerusalem . . . and of Jeremiah . . . and of all the singing men and the singing women"—so that they made "an ordinance of it in Israel," and recorded the words of their lamentation in their historical writings—with what pathetic interest we nevertheless look back! And we wish there were no sadder end to the history of Judah and her kings impending, no bitterer tears to flow, no anguished cries to be heard, no shame to be bowed beneath! So the death of Josiah, and his place after death yet *on earth*, in memory, in heart, and in song, are fraught with no little interest, apart from faith's higher action, and are charged incentives to zeal, devotion, pure religion, and sensitiveness of conscience even for ourselves.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 3—7.—*The preferable service.* There is considerable uncertainty as to the meaning of the words (ver. 3), "put the holy ark in the house," etc. (see Exposition). But whatever interpretation we give them, it is clear that Josiah intended the Levites to understand that he required them to render a different and a higher service than that of carrying the ark as a burden on their shoulders; they were to "serve now the Lord their God, and his people Israel;" they were to do this by "standing in the holy place," by "killing the Passover," and thus enable "their brethren to do according to the Word of the Lord." In other words, instead of the work of sacred porterage to which they had been accustomed, they were to render important services in the sanctuary, were to be instrumental in the keeping of a sacred feast by all their brethren; were to render valuable assistance in aiding them to carry out the commandments of the Lord. They were to give up the lower for the higher service, the mechanical one for that which was more spiritual; one that was no longer needed for that which was urgent; the comparatively unprofitable for that which was likely to be fruitful of devotion and piety. We thus judge—

I. THAT ALL WORK FOR GOD MAY BE GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE. Josiah could not have meant that the carrying of the ark was not "service." Although the words, as they stand in the third verse, certainly bear that construction, we conclude that he could not have intended them to have that significance. No devout Jew would have questioned the statement that the work of carrying the ark of the covenant under Divine commandment was an act of sacred service. Indeed, it matters not how humble or even slight and trivial be the work we do in the cause of God, so long as it is rendered (1) *cheerfully*, and not of constraint or grudgingly; (2) *faithfully*, diligently, taking our part and carrying it out with loyalty and thoroughness; (3) *harmoniously*, in concert with our fellow-labourers; (4) *religiously*, devoutly, doing what we do as unto Christ, and not only as unto man; it is then good and sacred and acceptable unto God our Saviour.

"*All* works are good, and each is best
 As most it pleases thee;
Each worker pleases when the rest
 He serves in charity;
And neither work nor man unblest
 Wilt thou permit to be."

But there is another side to this truth. There are works which are to be preferred to others, if they can be rightly undertaken, because they are intrinsically better. Hence we urge—

II. THAT THERE IS WORK WHICH IS TO BE PREFERRED WHEN THE CHOICE IS OFFERED US. 1. *The spiritual to the mechanical; e.g.* leading in prayer or urging to religious decision or to deeper and fuller devotedness, (to be preferred) to the work of "the doorkeeper in the house of the Lord," good as that is in its time and way. 2. *The practical to the speculative; e.g.* doing some work of rescue or reformation rather than indulging in speculations as to the employments of the heavenly country, or trying to read the riddle of the Apocalypse. 3. *The sympathetic to the argumentative.* It may be well to demolish the arguments of the assailant of the faith; it is better to "visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction," to carry consolation and hope to those who are ready to faint or to despair. The logical man does well to argue, but the work of "the man who is a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest" is of a nobler, a Christlier kind. 4. *The costly to the costless.* No sum is too small for the treasury of the Lord, no word too simple for the sanctuary; yet is it a better thing to bring to Jesus Christ that which costs us something (2 Sam. xxiv. 24)—the work which commands and requires *our strength*, the word on which we have spent patient and prayerful thought, the feeling which is a real expenditure of ourselves.—C.

Vers. 6—16.—*The service of the Lord.* From this account of Josiah's great Passover we may learn—

I. THAT RELIGIOUS LIFE INCLUDES A FEW GREAT OCCASIONS. The religious life of Israel included some special occasions, of which this was one. Provision was made in the Law for one event of surpassing solemnity in every year (Lev. xvi.). And the very checkered course the nation ran provided a few extraordinary scenes which were great and sacred opportunities. Thus is it with individual lives. During a life of ordinary length and interest there will occur some few events which are signal, striking, critical. Much may depend on them; much use should be made of them. But, after all, it is not by them that our life will be sustained, and it is not upon them that any wise man will rely. It is the *regular* worship; it is the *daily* devotion; it is the *habitual* recognition of God and appeal to him that determines our spiritual position, that makes us to "live before" him and in him.

II. THAT THE SERVICE OF GOD PROVIDES A VERY WIDE OPPORTUNITY. How many men, how many classes or orders of men, contributed to this one service! The king inspired and directed it (vers. 1, 2); the Levites "killed the Passover" (vers. 6—11); the priests "sprinkled the blood" (ver. 11). The heads of the orders, from the king downwards, contributed generously of their flocks to supply the people's need (vers. 7—9). The singers sang (ver. 15); the porters "waited at every gate" (ver. 15). So "all the service of the Lord" was rendered, every one taking his place and doing his best thereat (ver. 16). The Church of Christ is one body with many members, and all the members have not the same office; very various indeed are the offices which are rendered by the disciples of the one Lord. And as, year by year, Christian life, as well as civilized life, becomes more complex and intricate, it becomes more decisively and imperatively our duty to recognize the fact that, while our own particular function has its importance, it is only one among many others, and that every one of us is beholden to his fellows for valuable services which it is not in his own power to render. And it is well also to mark that, in a state so complicated, with so many posts to be filled, there is the less excuse for any idle member.

III. THAT THE SERVICE OF OTHERS SHOULD PRECEDE PROVISION FOR OURSELVES. "Afterward they made ready for themselves" (ver. 14). In the kingdom of Christ we are not to stand upon our official rights; we are to claim the supreme honour of serving others, after the manner of our Divine Leader. He was "among us as one that serveth;" he was here "not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and we never stand nearer to him than when we abnegate any right we might officially claim, and prefer to wait upon others' wants; to minister to their necessities; to make them glad, or to do them good. Of ourselves we may think and for ourselves we may care, *but afterward*, not first.

IV. THAT WE MAY RENDER AN EXCELLENT SERVICE BY A REVIVAL OF THE FORGOTTEN.

It does not follow that old usages, though they once had the sanction of Christian custom, should be revived. Possibly they are better left alone. "The old order changeth," etc. On the other hand, the time may come for their revival, if not in the same form, in a different one. *That* usage, in some form, deserves to be restored which promotes devotion, humility, charity.—C.

Vers. 17—19.—*The moral of the Passover.* The keeping of this Passover is very particularly described in this chapter, and we may be sure that it was entered into and enjoyed, as a religious festival, with exceeding zest. We naturally ask—What was its significance? What did it mean to those who celebrated it? We reply that in it and by it—

I. THEY RECOGNIZED THEIR UNITY AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD. They went back in thought to the time when they were bound together in the strong bond of a common sorrow; when they were a suffering people bent beneath the same yoke, bleeding with the same blows; and they recognized the fact that they were all the children of their fathers to whom Moses came as the great prophet and saviour. And the lamb of which they partook, with not a bone of its body broken, was the symbol of the national unity.

II. THEY REJOICED IN A GREAT DIVINE DELIVERANCE—A DELIVERANCE THROUGH SACRIFICE. The prevailing thought of the whole institution was God's merciful and mighty interposition on their behalf, redeeming them from the land of bondage and misery, bringing them out into liberty and happiness, and constituting them a nation, holy unto himself. And closely connected with the main idea of deliverance was that of *sacrifice;* they commemorated the fact that through the sacrifice of a slain lamb they had been spared and redeemed.

III. THEY HAD FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH ONE ANOTHER. The Feast of the Passover and of Unleavened Bread was one in which they rejoiced together both as families and as a congregated nation "before the Lord." Then they had true fellowship with one another, meeting and greeting one another as members of the same redeemed nation, whom the Lord had pitied and restored; and while they were thus gladdened in heart as they associated one with another, they were also solemnized by the thought that they met together in the city of God, in the courts of the Lord's house, in his own presence. Theirs was a sacred union and communion; it was fellowship with the Supreme.

When we meet, as Christian men, in ordinary worship, and more particularly when we gather together at the Lord's table, we are moved and animated by this same spirit, by these same convictions and considerations. 1. We realize our essential unity, our oneness in Jesus Christ. Are we not all members of that race on which, in all its distance from the home of God, he had compassion and which he stooped to save? Are we not bound together, not only as partakers of the same human nature, but as those who have bowed beneath the same yoke, who have needed the same Divine Redeemer, who have suffered in the same affliction? 2. We rejoice together in the same glorious redemption—a redemption that (1) not only was designed and begun, but was triumphantly completed; (2) a redemption which, in its spiritual character and its everlasting issues, dwarfs even such a great national deliverance as that which this Passover commemorated; (3) a redemption which could only be (and was) accomplished through the sacrifice of the "Lamb of God," slain *from* the foundation of the world *for* the recovery of the world. 3. We meet to have holy and happy fellowship with one another, and also hallowed and elevating fellowship with our Father and his Son Jesus Christ (1 John i. 3).—C.

Vers. 24, 25.—*An early sunset.* That very good men may make very great mistakes we hardly need to be told; unfortunately, we have all too many illustrations of that fact. The text provides us with a very melancholy instance. What *had* Josiah to do with this contest between the kings of Egypt and Assyria? Was *his* heart, too, "lifted up," that he thought himself and his people more than a match for the disciplined hosts of Egypt? Had he been attacked, and had he cast himself on God as Hezekiah did when Sennacherib appeared against him, then he might have hoped confidently for victory. But to contest with a great world-power on worldly principles was a supreme and a fatal error. He paid the penalty of his folly with his life. "His sun went down while it was yet day." So passed, needlessly and unfortunately, one of the best and boldest spirits that occupied the throne of Judah. Regarding his death as that of one early removed from the scenes of earthly activity, we are naturally affected by—

I. ITS EXTREME SADNESS. We are not surprised to read of so demonstrative and so fervent-natured a people as the Jews were, that "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah;" nor that Jeremiah uttered his prophet's plaint concerning him. It was a time for profound sorrow; and even passionate grief might, under such circumstances, be excused. For the nation had not merely lost its chief; it had lost an invaluable leader, a king who was leading in the paths of righteousness and therefore of prosperity. There must come occasions to the country, to the Church, to the city, to the family, when one man's death will be felt to be a calamity. Very wise is that community, sacred or secular, national or domestic, that recognizes this fact and provides against it; that secures such resources, material or spiritual, that when such a blow comes everything will not be lost; that when its best is taken it has still much in reserve; that it is not dependent for the maintenance of its liberty, or its security, or its vigorous existence on anything so precarious as one human being's life.

II. ITS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Why did God not interpose to prevent Josiah from throwing his life away? Why did he let darkness come down at noon, and put an end to this bright and useful day? Why does he not now intervene between us and the death we speak of as premature? Why does he permit the young statesmen to overtax his strength and die in his prime; the young minister to commit himself to the treacherous tide and be drowned in the very fulness of his powers and the midst of his usefulness; the young missionary to expose his life to the savages who pierce him with the poisoned spear? We ask such questions, wondering, if not complaining, at the Divine inaction. But we might very justly and more properly ask ourselves another question—What right have we to expect that God will give to any man a particular term of earthly life that *we* may choose for him? Has he promised to confer any one length of days on his servants? Is not the gift of every added day a prolongation of his goodness and his mercy? Ought we not, rather than complain, to bless him for the number of years he does bestow—a number which is greater than our deserving? Would it be really wise or kind of our heavenly Father if he were always interposing to prevent us from suffering the natural consequences of our error or our negligence, because we were right at heart with him? Would that be the way to discipline, to purify, to perfect his children? No! when God lets death

"Descend in sudden night
On manhood's middle day,"

he is not unrighteous, nor is he really unwise or unkind. Get down far enough, and we stand on the rock of righteousness and wisdom and love. We may look at—

III. ALLEVIATING ASPECTS OF IT. No doubt, when Josiah found that he was "sore wounded," and that he could not recover, he would grieve more or less, as Hezekiah did. But as he confronted death he would become reconciled to the will of God, and he would, probably, have some hope concerning himself for the future, and would entrust his country to the care of God. But we have a much larger measure of alleviation than Josiah had. For there has visited us and spoken to us that Divine One who is the Resurrection and the Life indeed. And in the light of his revealing truth, and in the hope of his gracious promise, we look upon death as introducing us into another part of the kingdom of God—another and a better; a sphere from which sin is shut out;—and not only sin, but weariness and disappointment and sorrow; a sphere that will be ever brightening and broadening as added years reveal in us and to us "enlarged and liberated powers."—C.

Vers. 1—19.—*The great Passover of Josiah.* I. GREAT IN RESPECT OF ITS CONFORMITY TO THE LAW. To suppose (De Wette, Thenius, and others) that never before had a Passover been observed in Israel or Judah since the days of Samuel (ver. 18; 1 Esdr. i. 20, 21) or of the judges (2 Kings xxiii. 22), is not only to extract an unwarrantable inference from the sacred text, but is contradicted by the fact that

Hezekiah, a former King of Judah, celebrated a Passover in Jerusalem which was not merely *a* Passover of his own arranging, but *the* Passover (ch. xxx. 1, 2) prescribed by the Law of Moses (vers. 16, 18). That this Passover, however, should have adhered more closely to the prescriptions of the lawgiver than any former, demands no additional explanation beyond the fact that it was celebrated in Josiah's eighteenth year (ver. 19), and after the discovery of the book of the Law (ch. xxxiv. 14, 15). The stricter adherence to Mosaic regulation appeared in three things. 1. *The exactness of the date.* The solemnity began "on the fourteenth day of the first month" (ver. 1), as the book of the Law commanded (Exod. xii.). Hezekiah's festival commenced "in the second month," because of the difficulty of getting ready for the stipulated time (ch. xxx. 2, 3). The Passover proper also ended on one day, *i.e.* all were able to eat the sacrificial lamb at the appointed time (ver. 16), without any requiring to defer their participation thereof for any reason whatever (Numb. ix. 6—12). 2. *The unity of the place.* The feast was held in Jerusalem (ver. 1) by all its celebrants. The same was true of Hezekiah's Passover (ch. xxx. 1), though it is doubtful if as much could be said of earlier observances from the days of the judges or of Samuel. 3. *The completeness of the ritual.* Everything was done "in accordance with the Word of the Lord by the hand of Moses" (ver. 6); *i.e.* the instructions as to the duties of the priests, Levites, and people; as to the killing, burning, eating of the victims; and as to the presentation of mazzoth gifts for the ensuing feast, were faithfully carried out.

II. GREAT IN RESPECT OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR ITS OBSERVANCE. Not greater as to amount of labour than were those made in connection with Hezekiah's festival; but still great. 1. *Concerning the priests.* These were set in their charges and encouraged to the service of the house of the Lord (ver. 2). Following the example of Jehoiada (ch. xxiii. 18), Josiah distributed among the divisions of the priesthood as arranged by David (1 Chron. xxiv.) the different parts of work required by the Law of Moses in the celebration of the Passover, *i.e.* he set them "according to their daily courses, being arrayed in long garments, in the temple of the Lord" (1 Esdr. i. 2); after which he strengthened them for their labours by detailed instructions as to their duties, and by encouraging exhortations to its faithful performance. 2. *Concerning the Levites.* These were: (1) Defined as to their official work and character; in respect of the former being called "teachers of all Israel" (cf. ch. xvii. 8, 9; Neh. viii. 7, 9), and with reference to the latter being designated "holy unto the Lord" (Numb. iii. 12, 13)—an epithet applied also to the priests (ch. xxiii. 6; Lev. xxi. 6), and even to the people (Deut. vii. 6); an epithet expressive of outward consecration, which, however, ought in every instance to reflect an inward consecration as its ground and justification. (2) Directed about the ark, which they were told to "put," or leave (Keil), "in the house which Solomon the son of David King of Israel did build" (ver. 3). The ark, it is supposed, had been removed from the holy of holies during the idolatrous reigns of Manasseh and Amon by these kings themselves (Estius, Piscator), or by the priests who wished to preserve it (A. Clarke), and now was ordered by Josiah to be replaced; but against this stands the fact that the work of placing the ark in the holy of holies belonged not to the Levites, but to the priests (ver. 7). It has also been conjectured that the Levites had been accustomed to carry the ark about the temple courts during the Passover celebration "under the impression that they were required so to do by the Law, and that Josiah pointed out to them the alteration which had taken place in this respect since the erection of the temple by Solomon" (Bertheau); but for this conjecture there is no positive historical foundation. A third explanation is that, as the Levites were no longer required to carry the ark about from place to place since it now had a resting-place in the temple, they should leave it there and give themselves to such other duties as were now demanded of them (Keil). (3) Commanded relative to themselves—to arrange themselves according to their fathers' houses and after their courses according to the writings of David and Solomon (ver. 4); to take up their stations in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of their lay brethren, so that one of their divisions should fall to each father's house of the laymen (ver. 5); to kill the Passover and sanctify themselves, probably by washing themselves, before handing the blood to the priests to sprinkle on the altar (Keil), or after they had done so and before they performed any further duties (Bertheau); and, finally, to prepare, *sc.* the Passover for their brethren the laymen, that they might do according to the Word of the Lord by the hand of Moses (ver. 6). 3. *Concerning the people.* These, *i.e.* such of them as were poor, or had come from a distance without having brought the necessary sacrificial animals, were furnished with lambs, kids, and bullocks, or small cattle and oxen (vers. 7—9), without which they could not have taken part in the celebration. At least the poor would have been excluded, which would have marred both the completeness and hilarity of the celebration.

III. GREAT IN RESPECT OF ITS ACCOMPANYING LIBERALITY. 1. *On the part of the king.* From the royal revenues Josiah contributed for the Passover offerings (1) largely—thirty thousand lambs and kids and three thousand bullocks (ver. 7), a much larger gift than was presented by Hezekiah (ch. xxx. 24); and (2) promptly, taking the lead in his good work, and so supplying an example to his subjects. 2. *On the part of the royal princes.* These, copying the action of their sovereign, likewise made donations (1) freely, or "for a free-will offering"—an indispensable quality in all religious giving (2 Cor. viii. 12); and it may be hoped (2) largely, though this is not stated. They would hardly fall behind the princes in the time of Hezekiah (ch. xxx. 24). 3. *On the part of the rulers of the temple.* Hilkiah the high priest (ch. xxxiv. 9), Zechariah, perhaps the next in rank to him, "the second priest" (2 Kings xxv. 18; Jer. lii. 24), and Jehiel, the chief of the line of Ithamar (Ezra viii. 2), exhibited a similar praiseworthy liberality (ver. 8). 4. *On the part of the Levite princes.* Six of these whose names are recorded—Conaniah, with his two brothers Shemaiah and Nethaneel, with Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad—also displayed a high degree of generosity (ver. 9).

IV. GREAT IN RESPECT OF ITS CO-OPERATING ACTIVITY. Each had his part to perform, and each performed it in such a way as not to hinder, but to accelerate the progress; and not to mar, but to increase the effect of the whole. 1. *The priests.* These (1) stood in their place beside the altars (ver. 10; ch. xxx. 16); (2) sprinkled the blood they received from the Levites (ver. 11; ch. xxx. 16); and (3) offered burnt offerings and the fat until night (ver. 14). 2. *The Levites.* These (1) killed the Passover victims (ver. 11); (2) flayed or skinned them (ver. 11); and (3) removed from their carcases such parts as were designed to be offered as burnt offerings (ver. 12); after which they (4) roasted the Passover with fire, according to the Mosaic ordinance (ver. 13; Exod. xii. 8, 9); (5) boiled the other offerings in pots, caldrons, and pans (ver. 13); (6) divided them as they were ready among the people (ver. 13); and (7) prepared the Passover for themselves and for the priests (ver. 14). 3. *The singers.* These, the sons of Asaph, stood in their places, in the court of the temple, discoursing music with harps, psalteries, and cymbals (1 Chron. xxv. 1), without once leaving their ranks even to eat the Passover, the Levites preparing for and fetching to them their portion (ver. 15). 4. *The porters.* At every gate these watched, never departing from their service, because the Levites did for them as for the musicians (ver. 15). Thus each contributed his part, and all worked harmoniously towards the production of the general result.

V. GREAT IN RESPECT OF ITS CELEBRATING NUMBERS. The feast was attended by: 1. *The inhabitants of Jerusalem*, including Josiah and his princes, with the priests and the Levites. 2. *All Judah*, meaning the population beyond the metropolis, in the country districts. 3. *The children of Israel*; i.e. the members of the northern kingdom who had not been carried into exile, and who had come to Jerusalem to be present at the feast.

Learn: 1. The duty of observing the public ordinances of religion. 2. The beauty and value of unity and co-operation in Christian work and worship. 3. The propriety of having special seasons of religious service.—W.

Vers. 20—27.—*The death of Josiah.* I. JOSIAH'S MILITARY EXPEDITION. (Ver. 20.) Seemingly the only expedition in his reign. 1. *When it took place.* "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple;" *i.e.* after the eighteenth year of his reign, in point of fact, thirteen years after (ch. xxxiv. 1). 2. *Against whom it was directed.* Necho King of Egypt; in Egyptian, Neku, son of Psammatik I., the illustrious founder of the Saitic or twenty-sixth dynasty, and grandson of Necho I., of the twenty-fifth or Ethiopian dynasty. Necho II. ascended the throne of the Pharaohs in B.C. 612, and reigned sixteen years. A warlike and adventurous prince, he was likewise devoted to commercial pursuits; he possessed two fleets of Greek-made triremes, one in the

Mediterranean and another in the Red Sea. In his service Phœnician sailors were the first to circumnavigate Africa (Herod., iv. 44). 3. *For what reason it was projected.* To oppose Necho, who was on his way through Palestine towards Carchemish on the Euphrates, to fight against the King of Assyria. Whether this sovereign was "King of Assyria proper"—in which case he would most likely be Esarhaddon II., the last ruler of Nineveh—or whether he was the Babylonian monarch Nabopolassar, who seized the empire after the overthrow of the Assyrian power, cannot be conclusively determined, although the best authorities favour the latter hypothesis (Ebers, Sayce, Rawlinson). In any case, Necho, taking advantage either of the declining power of Nineveh, or of the still unsettled state of Babylonian affairs, resolved to strike a blow for the recovery of those Asiatic provinces which had formerly been subject to the Pharaohs; and Josiah, still regarding himself as a tributary of the Assyrian crown, and probably under Jeremiah's teaching (Jer. xlvii. 25), dreading the rise of the Egyptian power, hastened to resist his advance (B.C. 610).

II. JOSIAH'S PROVIDENTIAL WARNING. (Ver. 21.) 1. *The purport of this warning.* Before the two armies met, Necho despatched an embassy to Josiah, requesting him to desist from offering opposition. (1) Because he, Necho, was not seeking to disturb or injure him, Josiah, but was aiming at Assyria—"the house wherewith I have war." Cf. Joash to Amaziah (ch. xxv. 18, 19). (2) Because he, Necho, was acting in accordance with a Divine commission, so that in opposing him Josiah would be guilty of resisting God, and would only bring ruin upon himself. In claiming to act under the impulse of Heaven, Necho probably meant no more than Pianchi-Mer-Amon of the twenty-fifth dynasty, who, when marching against Tafnakhth and other rebel chieftains, said, "Thou knowest what Amon the great god hath commanded us;" and again, "I am born of the loins, created from the egg, of the deity; the divine procreation is in me. All hail to him, I have not acted without his knowing; *he* ordained that I should act" ('Records,' etc., ii. 84, 91). 2. *The author of this warning.* Though Necho may have had no other idea in using the term "god" than that above explained, and though certainly it cannot be assumed that he understood himself to be the medium of conveying a Divine warning to the King of Judah, it is nevertheless clear that the Chronicler beheld in the incident the finger of God. Whether Jehovah actually put the words into Necho's mouth, or only permitted him to speak as he did, the Hebrew historian, perhaps judging from the fatal issue of the war, regarded the message of Pharaoh as a clear warning from Heaven which Josiah should have accepted. There is no need for supposing either that Necho spoke of Josiah's God or that Josiah's God spoke to Necho.

III. JOSIAH'S LAMENTABLE OBSTINACY. (Ver. 22.) 1. *His rejection of the warning.* "He hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God." To assume Josiah knew that Necho was going against Nabopolassar with the express sanction of Jehovah, and that Necho's dissuasive admonition proceeded straight from Heaven, and to hold moreover that Josiah, cognizant of all this, nevertheless closed his ear against the voice of the Supreme, is to put the worst construction possible on Josiah's conduct; to understand the sacred writer's language as merely importing that Josiah was not disposed to hearken to Necho's advice, and so failed to recognize it as "from the mouth of God," is probably to put upon the King of Judah's behaviour the best construction it will admit of. Had Josiah not been bent upon this war, he would have quickly discerned the prudence of Necho's counsel. 2. *His determination to fight.* "Josiah would not turn his face from him" (Necho), but pushed on and offered battle in the valley of Megiddo, Magdol (Herod., ii. 159)—the modern *Lejjun*, west of the Plain of Esdraelon, and near Taanach (Robinson), though a claim has been advanced for the modern *Mujedd'a*, "an important ruin in the Plain of Beisân, at the foot of Gilboa" (Conder). Here had once stood an old Canaanitish town, of which the king was conquered by Joshua (Josh. xii. 21), and which, though within the territory of Issachar, was yet assigned to Manasseh (Josh. xvii. 11). In later years Solomon selected it as one of his fortified cities (1 Kings ix. 15). In Megiddo Ahaziah sought refuge when mortally wounded by Jehu (2 Kings ix. 27). Megiddo had been the scene of a great battle between Thothmes III. and one of the confederations of the small kings and princes of Palestine, B.C. 1600 ('Records,' etc., ii. 35). Now on this historic ground the forces of Josiah and Necho came into collision.

IV. JOSIAH'S FATAL WOUND. (Ver. 23.) 1. *The ineffectual disguise.* Like Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead (ch. xviii. 29), Josiah resorted to a customary but foolish and, in this case, useless artifice. Josiah should have ventured upon no campaign which demanded such an expedient. Had Josiah been sure of the Divine approbation, he would have needed no protection beyond the invisible shield and buckler of Jehovah (Ps. xci.). 2. *The death-winged arrow.* No coat of mail can protect a soldier, or stratagem prolong the days of him whose hour is come. Whether the Egyptian bowmen penetrated through Josiah's disguise or not, Jehovah did. If Necho's archers shot at random, the almighty and omniscient Archer (Lam. ii. 4; Job vi. 4; Rev. vi. 2) did not. Every shaft that flies from his hand hits. Josiah believed he was only fighting against Necho; Necho told him he was fighting against God. In this unequal contest (Isa. xxvii. 4) Josiah was of course defeated. "The archers shot at King Josiah; and King Josiah said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded."

V. JOSIAH'S UNTIMELY DEATH. (Ver. 24.) It was: 1. *Immediate.* The pious but mistaken monarch felt he had received his death-blow. Obeying his instructions, his soldiers lifted him from his war-chariot, and, placing him "in a second chariot which belonged to him, and was probably more comfortable for a wounded man" (Keil), conveyed him to Jerusalem, where he shortly after expired. 2. *Untimely.* What Hezekiah feared was about to happen to him in his thirty-ninth year (Isa. xxxviii. 10), happened in reality to Josiah; he was deprived of the residue of his years. What another singer prayed against (Ps. cii. 24) befell him, perhaps, notwithstanding his prayers—he was cut off in the midst of his days. In the language of a Hebrew prophet, "his sun had gone down at noon" (Amos viii. 9). Considering his elevated character, the quality of the work he had already performed, and the promise of good for his land and people which lay, or seemed to lie, in his prolonged life, his death could scarcely be pronounced other than premature; it was all too soon for Jerusalem and Judah. Yet was it not too soon for God, who best knew the moment in which to fulfil his own promise (ch. xxxiv. 28; Ps. xxxi. 15); or for Josiah, who was thereby removed from the evil to come (Ps. xii. 1; Isa. lvii. 1), so that his eyes saw not the calamities which forthwith began to descend upon his country (ch. xxxvi. 3). 3. *Regretted.* (1) Mourned for by the people. When they buried him in the sepulchres of his fathers (ver. 24), or in his own sepulchre (2 Kings xxiii. 30)—perhaps in one of the chambers of Manasseh's tomb (ch. xxxiii. 20)—the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem felt that "a prince and a great man" had been taken from them. They sorrowed for him as they had never before sorrowed for a sovereign, "lamenting and grieving on his account many days" (Josephus), with such an intensity of heartfelt anguish that even after the Captivity "the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon" became a proverbial expression for the deepest and truest grief (Zech. xii. 11). (2) Lamented by Jeremiah. The most plaintive of all the prophets, who had commenced his ministry in the thirteenth year of the deceased sovereign's reign (Jer. i. 1), composed a dirge to keep in memory his death. Whether that elegiac hymn was recited at his funeral (Stanley) or not, it was placed in the national collection of such threnodies, and was long after chanted by the singing men and singing women who, on fixed days, were appointed to recall the memory of the good king.

LESSONS. 1. The danger of intermeddling with other people's strife (Prov. xxvi. 17). 2. The folly of rejecting good advice, even though given by an enemy. 3. The probability that he who runs into danger unbidden will not escape unhurt (Ps. xci. 11). 4. The certainty that death will overtake all, in such an hour as they think not (Matt. xxiv. 44). 5. The loss which a good man's death is to a community or nation (2 Kings ii. 12). 6. The propriety of perpetuating the recollection of noble lives (Prov. x. 7). 7. The fitness of song to express sorrowful emotions (2 Sam. i. 17; Micah ii. 4).—W.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

One short chapter now brings to a conclusion the work, in so many aspects remarkable, called 'The Chronicles.' And thirteen verses sum the contents of the four last pre-Captivity kings of the line of Judah. The words of Keil, in opening this last

chapter in his commentary, are not unworthy of note. He says, "As the kingdom of Judah after Josiah's death advanced with swift steps to its destruction by the Chaldeans, so the author of the Chronicle goes quickly over the reigns of the last kings of Judah, who by their godless conduct hastened the ruin of the kingdom. As to the four kings remaining, who reigned between Josiah's death and the destruction of Jerusalem, he gives, besides their ages at their respective accessions, only a short characterization of their conduct towards God, and a statement of the main events which, step by step, brought about the ruin of the king and the burning of Jerusalem and the temple."

This chapter, then, contains, first, very brief accounts of the four reigns of *Jehoahas* (vers. 1—4), *Eliakim* or *Jehoiakim* (vers. 4—8), *Jehoiachin* (vers. 9, 10), and *Zedekiah* (vers. 10—13); next, general remarks on the iniquity that heralded the destruction of the nation and the punishment of it by the Chaldean captivity (vers. 14—17); thirdly, the methods of that destruction and captivity (vers. 17—21); and lastly, the restoring proclamation of Cyrus King of Persia.

Ver. 1.—**The people of the land took Jehoahaz** (see parallel, 2 Kings xxiii. 30). The form of expression may indicate the hearty zeal of the nation for this chosen son of Josiah, who seems to have been not the eldest. In the next verse, as Revised Version, he is called *Joahas*. In 1 Chron. iii. 15, as in the affecting passage Jer. xxii. 10—12, his name appears as *Shallum*. His mother's name was Hamutal, while the name of the mother of his immediate successor was Zebudah (2 Kings xxiii. 31 and 36).

Ver. 3.—**Put him down**; Hebrew, וַיְסִירֵהוּ; *i.e. deposed him* (Revised Version). **At Jerusalem.** In something more than three months Pharaoh-Necho seems to have been returning, and in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The parallel (2 Kings xxiii. 31) tells us that he put Jehoahaz "in bands" at "Riblath in the land of Hamath" (Ezek. xix. 4). **And condemned the land**; *i.e.* inflicted a fine on the land; Hebrew, וַיַּעֲנֹשׁ. From this time nothing further is heard of Jehoahaz or Shallum.

Ver. 4.—**Eliakim.** The meaning of the word is "God sets up;" the meaning of Jehoiakim is "Jehovah sets up." An Egyptian king knew and recognized the word "God," but possibly meant to taunt the "Jehovah" of the Jew.

Ver. 5.—Here we note the age of Jehoiakim as greater than that of Jehoahaz, and in the parallel we read that his mother was different.

Ver. 6.—**Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon.** Our mere allusions in this and the following verse to Nebuchadnezzar's relations to Jehoiakim and Judah are strange in comparison with the graphic account furnished by the parallel (2 Kings xxiv. 1—6). The name is the same with *Nabokodrosoros*, is written in the Assyrian monuments *Nebu-kuduri-utzur*, and meaning, "Nebo (Isa. xlvi. 1), protector from ill," or "protects the crown." In Jeremiah (xlix. 28) we have the name written Nebuchadrezzar, as also in Ezekiel. Nebuchadnezzar, second King of Babylon, was the son of Nabopolassar, who took Nineveh B.C. 625, and reigned above forty years. Though we are here told he bound Jehoiakim in chains, to take him to Babylon, for some reason or other he did not carry out this intention, and Jehoiakim was put to death at Jerusalem (Jer. xii. 18, 19; xxxvi. 30; Ezek. xix. 8, 9). The expedition of Nebuchadnezzar was B.C. 605–4 (Dan. i. 1; Jer. xxv. 1), and *during* it, his father dying, he succeeded to the throne.

Ver. 7.—(Comp. Dan. i. 2.) The temple here called his temple was, no doubt, the temple of Belus, or in the vernacular "Merodach," the Babylonian god of war. This rifling of the sacred vessels of Jerusalem's temple for Babylon's temple was the significant beginning of the end for Judah now at last, after many a warning.

Ver. 8.—**The rest of the acts of Jehoiakim.** As our compiler has literally told us none at all, we need but note his expression here as a convenient formula, indicating his own intentional brevity, and the fact that he was privy to all in the original sources, which he nevertheless now omitted; yet see Jer. vii. 9; xix. 13, etc. The telling expression, **what was found in him,** is too readily to be filled up from the parallel, in its vers. 3, 4. **Jehoiachin his son.** In 1 Chron. iii. 16 he is called *Jeconiah*, and in Jer. xxii. 24 he is called *Coniah*.

Ver. 9.—**Eight years old.** Our text, not the writer, is in error, and the parallel furnishes the correction, "*eighteen* years old."

Ver. 10.—**When the year was expired**; *i.e.* at the beginning of the new year, in spring (ch. xxiv. 23). It appears, from 2 Kings xxv. 27—30, that the captivity of Jehoiachin, which thus began, lasted thirty-seven years, till B.C. 561, past the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and that he was thenceforward kindly treated by Evil-Merodach. Compare particularly with this verse the parallel in its vers. 10—16. **Zedekiah his brother**; *i.e.* not adopting the very generic usage of the terms of relationship, so common in Old Testament language, his *uncle*. His mother (*Hamutal*, ver. 18 of parallel) was the same with the mother of Jehoahaz. Ten years old evidently when Jehoiakim began his reign, he must have been thirteen years younger than his whole brother Jehoahaz. Zedekiah's name was before Mattaniah. The account of Zedekiah in the parallel (which see) is very much more full.

Ver. 12.—**Humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet.** Very numerous passages in the Book of Jeremiah (xxi.—lii.) illustrate both this clause and generally the feeble character and uncertain career of Zedekiah.

Ver. 13.—**He also rebelled against . . . Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God** (*Elohim*). The criticism of the Prophet Ezekiel upon this oath-violation on the part of Zedekiah is to be found Ezek. xvii. 12—20; xxi. 25. **Unto the Lord God of Israel.** Note *here* the resorting on the part of the Jew to the name, *Jehovah*. It is not this name that is used at the commencement of the verse.

Ver. 14.—This, with the following three verses, may be regarded as the formal and final indictment of the people of Judah, and may be compared with that of Israel (2 Kings xvii. 6—23). **All the chief of the priests** (see 1 Chron. xxiv. 1, 3—19). The heads of the twenty-four courses there spoken of, with the high priest added, sum up the twenty-five men of Ezek. viii. 16, the entire of which chapter may well be read with the present history, and its description of the culminating pitch of wickedness of king, priests, and people.

Ver. 15.—**His messengers.** The chief of these were presumably Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. The marginal references (Jer. xxv. 3—7; xxxv. 12—15) are very interesting, both for this verse and the following.

Ver. 16.—**No remedy** (comp. our ch. xxi. 18; Prov. vi. 15; xxix. 1; Jer. viii. 15; xiv. 19; xxxiii. 6; Mal. iv. 2 [iii. 20]).

Ver. 17.—Powerful illustrations of this verse may be read in Lam. ii. and Ezek. ix. throughout the length of the chapters.

Ver. 18.—Compare the parallel in its vers. 13—17 (2 Kings xxv.); Jer. lii. 15—23.

Vers. 19, 20.—(Compare the parallel, 2 Kings xxv. 1—12; Jer. xxxix. 1—10; lii. 24—30.) **The reign of the kingdom of Persia**; *i.e.* the ascending on the throne of the Persian king. The immediate successor of Nebuchadnezzar was his son Evil-Merodach.

Ver. 21.—**The word of the Lord.** Note marginal references (Jer. xxv. 9—12; xxix. 10). The three score and ten years of desolateness may probably best be dated from Nebuchadnezzar's first taking of Jerusalem, B.C. 606–5. Although this date does not tally exactly with the B.C. 538 of Cyrus's conquest of Babylon, yet the discrepancy is easily explained on more than one sufficiently natural supposition (*e.g.* that Cyrus's *reign* was not exactly synchronous in the beginning of it with his conquest of Babylon, etc.). **Enjoyed her sabbaths** (see Lev. xxvi. 34, 35, 43—46).

Ver. 22.—**In the first year of Cyrus King of Persia.** A period of half a century has elapsed between the latest date of the foregoing verses (circ. B.C. 586) and the date signalized here (circ. B.C. 538–6). With the proclamation of *Cyrus* begins in fact the manhood, with all its mystic, its wonderful, and its still non-progressing struggles, of the Jew. His simple childhood, wilful youth, are indeed for ever gone. But he and his nation are with unspeakably painful travail born. No life of nation that is or ever has been merits the devout observation and study that this unchallengeably does. Our present verse and the one succeeding it are, sentence for sentence, the same with the opening verses of the Book of Ezra, which may possibly once have joined on to Chronicles, as one work, though we think this exceedingly unlikely. Cyrus (the כּוֹרֶשׁ of the Hebrew text) was the son of a royal Persian, Cambysses; his mother was Mandane, daughter of Astyages, last King of Media. The name appears on the monuments, written *Kurus*. Cyrus defeated his grandfather Astyages, B.C. 559; ending thereby the Median royal line; and he defeated Crœsus, B.C. 546, possessing himself thereby of the kingdom of Lydia; he took Babylon, as above, B.C. 538. He himself died in battle, B.C. 529. **That the word of the Lord by . . . Jeremiah might be accomplished** (see Jer. xxv. 11—14; xxix. 9—11). **The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.** The fact is told us, and this, no doubt, as on a thousand other unsuspected occasions of far more intrinsic and vital interest in the Bible, is sufficient. It would have been interesting to know, however, even here, the mode in which Cyrus was appealed to; as, *e.g.*, it has been plausibly suggested that Daniel may have been in part instrumental in the work, and that, again, in part perhaps by directing the attention of Cyrus to Isa. xliv. 28; xlv. 1.

Ver. 23.—**Hath the Lord God of heaven given me . . . the Lord his God be with him.** The adopting by Cyrus of the Hebrew "Jehovah" in both these places cannot escape our notice. There can be no room to doubt that Cyrus was acquainted with the sacred literature of the Hebrews, and especially with the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as with the language of Daniel. It may have been partly a graceful act on the part of Cyrus to word his proclamation to the Jews thus, or it may have been simply, what under the circumstances came most naturally to him, with little or no intention in it either way. The numerous passages in Ezra parallel in matter with this verse do not need specification here. Now begins the new period of Jewish life, with fiercer probation, with unbounded and various trial, and probably of world-length continuance.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—23.—***The final indictment, sentence, and execution of it.*** It is in vers. 11—21 of this chapter that we are given to read the final summary of, *first*, the folly and sin of Judah, her king, princes, and people; and *second*, the just displeasure and necessary punishment of Jehovah after an unparalleled forbearance. The historic incidents of the four reigns which occupy this chapter abound in pathetic, tragic interest. The account of them given in the parallel (2 Kings xxiii. 31—xxv. 30) is fuller. And both are illustrated and extraordinarily enhanced in interest by the light and by the cross-lights flung on the scene in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (particularly Jer. xxi.; xxiv.; xxvii.—xxix.; xxxii.—xxxiv.; xxxvii.; xxxviii.; li. 59—lii. 34; Ezek. i. 1—3; xii. 13; xl. 1). Many of these portions of history write, and loudly utter forth as well, their own emphatic and impressive homilies. The present Scripture, however, offers matter of most solemn reflection, in summarizing the long indictment of centuries that lay against Judah, and in a most pathetic rehearsing of the compassionate, forbearing, ever-forgiving ministration of Divine love which had for equal length of time striven to prevail over her infidelity, yet all in vain! Her day of visitation had been not *one* day only; it had been many a day! She "knew" them not, and "now they are hid from her eyes." Judah's long-drawn sin, of many a day, year, generation, and even century, had been, in one word, idolatry. That sin incurs the guilt of the first two commandments set at nought. There is a sense, only too obvious and too certain, in which it is the world's fundamental source of sin and snare of sin. No age, no people, exempt from the danger, and every individual *exposed*, at any rate, to it.

I. THE CLAIM OF GOD UPON MAN IS THAT MAN WORSHIP HIM. The honoured word "worship" is often dishonoured, in our not keeping in vivid memory all its strangely beautiful import. To love supremely, to obey perfectly, to serve perpetually, to express praise and render homage intelligently, and to say without a reserve that all this is the simple due of the object adored—*this* is to worship! Notice: 1. The *claim* is absolute, one undivided and unshared, and always operating without intermission. 2. It is natural, reasonable, vindicable in every sense, and from every point of view. Nothing else *could* be thought, nothing else *would ever have been* thought, except from one circumstance. 3. It postulates the *consent*, not the conflict, of that in man which is called his free-will. That free-will is a great fact in human nature—solemn, responsible, and inspiring fact—but it is the central fact of a moral nature, instead of a merely physical or merely animal nature. Nay, more; it is the head and the crown—the very crown of that moral nature, resting on its brow, and *by rights* resting there as an *imperishable* crown. Unless miserably and most mournfully forfeited, it *is* such. There belongs to it by equal rights immortality of honour, and the honour of immortality. The lesson Judah never learnt effectually was that she was *not her own*. The last lesson any of us learns absolutely perfectly is—just that same. Happy is the fresh full life, the patience, the strength, the confidence, the love, of that man who has learnt, "rising up betimes," that he is not his own; and that he ought not to be sin's and Satan's, but the blest property of God, and prized (with and because of his free-will and all) of that God! It is when our free-will becomes an infatuated will, perverse will, *self*-will, that our glory is dragged in the dust, and our crown and diadem fall. There is no so great, broad, practical, ennobling rule for any man's and every man's life than to study to remember well and absolutely that he is God's and Christ's, and *not* (as also a man often says, oftener thinks in his heart, of his *money*), NOT his own, to do with himself, his lifetime, his powers, his heart, his tongue, "*what he likes.*"

II. DIVINEST MINISTRY IS VOUCHSAFED IN SUPPORT OF THAT CLAIM. 1. That gracious ministry helps by *informing*. The force of habit, of example, of hereditary misinclinations and disinclinations, has been potent to put out *the* truth in this matter. "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people" (ver. 15). 2. The *informing* ministry is the ministry of *revelation*. 3. It is a graciously persistent one, repeating over and over again its various methods. 4. It is a warning, and, if needs be, a threatening ministry—sometimes so to the last degree, *confronting* a man, and standing awhile in his actual way, as the angel in the way of Balaam. 5. It is also an encouraging and rewarding ministry. None *who heed it* doubt this, or ever find it otherwise. Sin, how often *it* gave heart-ache and life-ache to king and people! but "the turning to the Lord God of Israel" (ver. 13) never failed to do the contrary. 6. It is a punishing and again relenting and forgiving ministry. How often punishment is learnt, before it is experienced—if, alas! it should be so by any—for the long last time! 7. When, after all, that ministry is sinned against, "mocked, despised, misused, till there is no remedy" (ver. 16), then comes the wreck of "wrath," that wrath which can no longer be made light of, decisive, irrevocable, and in itself dreadful.

III. After Judah's irrevocable sentence of punishment, and the dread seventy years of humiliation and captivity, there is the sudden, unexpected, Heaven-sent interposition of a great redemption. After the banishment from Eden it was so; after the deluge of Noah it was so; now, after Israel and Judah had run their course as separate kingdoms, it was so; after Malachi, the last of "the prophets," it was most chiefly so. And it is so now. The world of sin, the "mocking, despising, misusing" world of sin, the ever-suffering world of sin, pitiless toward itself, and mercilessly inflicting self-punishment, knows the announcement of an interposition great beyond all before, and the offer of a Heaven-sent, free, priceless hope and redemption!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Three melancholy spectacles.* As we read these verses we feel that we are drawing very near the end of the kingdom of Judah; there is an air of melancholy pervading this last chapter of the Hebrew chronicles. There are three things which it is sad to see.

I. A nation sinking into servitude. When Egypt comes up and deposes one king and sets up another, calling that other by a name that it pleases to confer, at the same time imposing a heavy tribute on the people of the land; and when, that power declining, Assyria sends its troops and, without any resistance, enters the capital, puts the sovereign in chains, and then extends to him a contemptuous protectorate; when this same power again comes up and carries away the sovereign after a brief reign of three months, and takes him away, with the most precious treasures of the capital;—we are affected by a sense of pitiful national decline. We enter into the feelings of its patriot-subjects who could not have helped contrasting the glories of the age of David and Solomon with the abject humiliation of their own time. A strong and self-respecting people falling into servitude, bowing its head to an utterly relentless power which has no other force than that of the sword and the war-chariot,—this is a melancholy spectacle indeed. It may profitably suggest to us the question—What is the real cause of a nation's fall? and it will be found, on inquiry, that while this may be due to overweening ambition, it is much more likely to be ascribed to indulgence, to demoralization, to the weakness which *must* attend moral and spiritual deterioration. Simplicity and purity of life, sustained by Christian principle—this is the one security against decline, subjection, and ruin.

II. A young man's hopes extinguished. No doubt the young prince Jehoahaz grew up in the court of Judah with high hopes for his future. His father was in possession of no mean estate, and there was every prospect of his succeeding to some measure, if not to the chief part of it. But, after three months' occupancy of power and enjoyment of wealth, to be cast into chains and taken away to languish in confinement in Egypt until he died, was a sad and sorry portion. We do not know, but we can well imagine, that there was high hope extinguished, love broken off, much earthly brightness suddenly eclipsed. It is one of the consolations of obscurity that it is much less likely than is prominence to be subjected to such sudden and painful overthrow. It is most wise on the part of all of us to have in reserve a spiritual force that will sustain us if we "suffer the loss of all things" human and temporal.

III. A YOUNG MAN CHOOSING THE EVIL PATH. Of Jehoahaz, as well as of Jehoiakim and of Jehoiachin (see 2 Kings xxiii. 32, 37; xxiv. 9), it is recorded that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord." This is peculiarly sad as applicable to Jehoahaz. Considering the gracious influences under which he spent his childhood and his boyhood at court, he ought to have done (as he must have known) better things. Instead of confirming and consolidating the glorious revolution effected by his father, he dissipated all good forces and broke up all good institutions. It is not in the power of most young men to work evil on such a scale; but who shall measure the good left undone and the evil wrought when one young man deliberately chooses the evil part? Within the compass of one human life large capacities are included; how large only Omniscience can tell. Let the young man feel that not for his own sake only, but also for the sake of a very large number of other human souls, it is of the greatest consequence that he should walk in the ways of heavenly wisdom.—C.

Ver. 8 (with Jer. xxii. 18).—*An unlamented death.* We learn more of this King of Judah in the prophetic writings of Jeremiah than in these brief annals. There we learn that his foreign policy was not less condemnable than his conduct of home affairs. When his treasury was low by reason of heavy payments to the foreign powers, he must needs build for himself a splendid and costly mansion (Jer. xxii. 14), and in order to do this he had to impress the labour of his subjects (Jer. xxii. 13); he thus excited a strong feeling of just resentment and natural disaffection among them, and brought down upon himself the severe rebuke of the prophet of the Lord. We also learn from Jeremiah that the king acted in daring defiance of God's holy Law, presuming to cut in two and to burn in the fire the sacred roll (Jer. xxxvi. 23). By this wanton and impious action he still further drew down upon him the wrath of Jehovah, and by that act he terribly prejudiced and injured his country. How, then, can we wonder that the Chronicler writes, as in the text, of "the abominations which he did"? and how can we wonder that his death excited so different, so opposite a feeling throughout all his kingdom to that which the death of his father called forth (ch. xxxv. 24, 25)? We have in him a melancholy instance of *an unlamented death* (Jer. xxii. 18).

I. A LAMENTABLE ABSENCE OF SORROW. Let no man say lightly or cynically, "I don't want any tears shed over my grave; I shall be quite content to die without any one sorrowing on my account." There is no true unselfishness, but much thoughtlessness, in such a sentiment. Any minister of religion who has stood at the grave-side, and has been unable to ask for God's comfort to be granted to those who are left behind, will know how little to be desired is the absence of grief at the death of a man or woman. For what does it mean? It means that God gave to such a man all the opportunities for winning human love, and that he did not gain it; for doing service, and that he left it undone; for rendering help and blessing, and that he did not render it; it means that a human life has been one long act of mean, barren, dreary selfishness, has been an utter failure, condemned of God and man! God forbid that any whom we love should die unlamented; with none to say, "Ah, my brother! ah, my sister!"

II. A SORROW MUCH TO BE DESIRED. Truly there is sorrow enough and to spare in this world of sin and woe. But there is one sorrow that no wise or good man would wish for one moment to be spared. It is that which we feel when our kindred and our friends are taken from us by death. The hope we have concerning these may chasten and (in time) supersede it. But sorrow there must be and should be. And it is well with us and for us that the heart bleeds freely then. For such sorrow is: 1. The tender tribute we pay to the worth of the departed, to their affection and to their goodness. 2. The proof that this hardening world has not petrified *our* spirit with its touch. 3. The share we have with all the best and truest of our race, enabling us to sympathize with them and to succour them. 4. The occasion which takes us often to the sympathizing Friend in elevating, chastening communion. 5. The unloosening of the ties which must soon be unbound to set us free.—C.

Ver. 17.—*Stooping.* "No compassion on him that stooped for age." There are many kinds of "stooping," some of which are to be commiserated, one of which is to be honoured and even envied and emulated. There is the stooping which is—

I. A MISFORTUNE. That of bodily deformity; such as was suffered by the poor woman of whom we read that "she had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bound together, and could in no wise lift up herself" (Luke xiii. 11). We do not wonder that the Lord of love had compassion on her, and "loosed her from her infirmity." Perhaps few men and women are more to be pitied than the deformed. They see all others round them standing, walking, running, erect in the full stature and freedom of manhood, and they themselves are subjects of uncomeliness and inability. How cruelly unchristian to treat these with contempt, or even with disregard! How are we bound, as the followers of our Lord, to extend to these stooping ones our sympathy, our brotherliness, our honour! "Trust me no more, but trust me no less," our great popular novelist makes such an afflicted one say continually; and here, as often, the secular writer is more Christian than he may know.

II. A MARK OF TIME. This is the case of those named in the text; they "stoop for age." The burdens of life have rested on their shoulders and have made them stoop. They have carried much, and they bend with the weight of the years they have spent. It is an honourable mark, like that of the "hoary head." Shall we *pity* them that stoop for age? Yes, if they have lived a life that has not been worthy, and move toward a future in which no star of hope is shining. No, if they are bent down with estimable and fruitful labour, with work that will leave many traces behind it—especially if the weight beneath which they stoop is the burden of others which they have generously and (perhaps) nobly borne (Gal. vi. 2); no, if this mark of the passage of time only indicates that he who thus stoops is nearing the end of his earthly service, that he may lay *it* down and take up the better work in the brighter light and the broader sphere, where toil knows no fatigue, and, instead of wearing out the worker, continually multiplies his power. But let those who "stoop for age" remember that their work below is nearly finished; that what else they would do here for the Master and for their kind they must do quickly; "so much the more (therefore) as they see the day approaching."

III. A SERIOUS DISCREDIT. There is: 1. The stoop of *servility*. This is discreditable. No one need be and no one should be servile. It is a mistake as well as a fault and a dishonour. Civility every one appreciates; respect, all who are worthy of it look for and like to receive; but cringing or servility is as unacceptable to him to whom it is shown as it is dishonourable and injurious to him by whom it is offered. 2. The stoop of *immorality*; the lowering of the standard of morals in order to accommodate ourselves to circumstances, in order to be free to gain or to enjoy that which, in our truer and worthier moods, we could not touch. This stooping of the soul is pitiable indeed; it is also condemnable indeed. If we have yielded to it, let us be ashamed of it; let us rise to our true height, let us stand erect again in the full stature of honourable and estimable Christian manhood. Only then can we respect ourselves and enjoy the esteem of the pure and good.

IV. THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT. We know who it is that has stooped the furthest; it is that Son of God who became the Son of man. It is he who, "though he was rich, for our sake became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9; and see Phil. ii. 3—8). We never rise so high in the estimation of our Divine Lord as when we stoop thus. When we are thus reduced we are enlarged indeed. When we renounce our right, whether it be (1) of enjoyment, or (2) of adornment, or (3) of enrichment, in order to reach and rescue others, then do we rise toward the nobility of our great Exemplar, and then are we in the way of reaping a large reward.—C.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Desecration and destruction.* We look at—

I. A SAD HISTORICAL FACT. Perhaps a Jew would say, the saddest of all the facts of history. This is the very climax of disasters—the great temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem burnt down, and all its precious treasures and all its sacred vessels carried away into a heathen land, to be there profaned by irreverent and wanton hands! Could anything happen more painful to the feelings, more shocking to the imagination, of the devout than that? All the work to which David consecrated his energies with such rare affection and devotion, to which Solomon brought all his wisdom and for which he obtained the most advanced culture of his time, brought to desolation by the ruthless hand of the heathen! That glorious, that sacred, that beloved building, meeting-place of God and man, where the people of God realized their highest privileges, and recognized their relation to their Redeemer and to one another, burned and desolated, the foot of the idolater intruding into its holiest sanctuary, and the hand of the spoiler taking away its most sacred treasure!

II. ITS SADDEST HISTORICAL ANALOGUE. Once there lived upon the earth a Son of man who could say of himself without presumption, "In this place is One greater than the temple" (Matt. xii. 6); and he once spake of "the temple of his body" (John ii. 21). And well, indeed, might the Son of God speak thus of himself; for was he not *the* manifestation of the Divine to the children of men, and did he not reveal *the* truth of God to mankind, and in his presence men drew near to God as they did not even in "the holy of holies"? We know how that living temple of God suffered from the rude violence of men, and at last "with wicked hands was slain." No such desecration took place when the temple was burnt and spoiled as was witnessed when Jesus Christ was crowned with thorns in the soldiers' hall, and was crucified at Calvary.

III. ITS LAMENTABLE ILLUSTRATION NOW. Where shall we find the visible, approachable, appreciable manifestation of God now? Where, but in the life and the character of good men? *We* are the temple of God when we are what our Divine Father created us to be; such are we then, that, as men draw nigh to us and observe us and learn of us, they know God and learn of him. But how may *this* temple be desecrated and destroyed? 1. By the profanation of our powers and our affections. When our powers are expended on the furtherance of that which is evil and on the production of that which is baneful; when our affections are wasted on those who are unworthy of our love; when we prize and when we pursue that which is below our true aspiration, and which leads us downward and backward;—then the temple of God is despoiled and desecrated. 2. By the guilty forfeiture of our life. What a destruction of the temple of God is a guilty suicide! And they are many who take their own lives. It is not only those who shoot or hang themselves that commit suicide; it is they who deliberately and repeatedly do those things which they must know are destroying their vitality and taking away their life; these are men who put a brand to the temple which God as well as man has built.

IV. ITS EXCELLENT OPPOSITE. This is found in the reverence we pay to the human body as the temple of God; the habit of regarding our bodily frame—and how much more our human spirit!—as a sacred thing, because it is (because we are) the very dwelling-place of God (see 1 Cor. ii. 9, 16, 17; vi. 19; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 20, 21; 1 Pet. ii. 5). It is this elevated and ennobling thought which, more than any other, stirs and strengthen us to "purify ourselves even as Christ the Lord is pure;" to seek, by earnest effort and frequent prayer, for the utmost attainable sanctity of spirit and of life.—C.

Ver. 20.—*Exile.* "And them . . . carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants [slaves] to him and his sons." The captivity of the Jews in Babylon may be regarded in three lights.

I. AS A PENALTY. It undoubtedly was *that;* nothing can be clearer than that they were permitted to be "the prey to the teeth" of the enemy because of their sins. The very next verse (21) intimates that it was disobedience to the Law of God that resulted in the denudation of the land. And the truth that national calamity is the consequence of national transgression is "writ large" and plain on every page of this Book of Chronicles. He may run that reads it. *Sin entails penalty.* The truth is written on the pages of national and individual history as well as on those of the Word of God. Every nation and every man may make up its (his) mind that, sooner or later, sin will entail defeat, humiliation, bondage. The penalty may take various forms, but penalty will most surely come. It may be *obviously physical*, or it may be *principally spiritual;* it will almost certainly be both the one and the other. But no man can harden himself against the Holy One and prosper. Whoso sinneth against him "wrongeth his own soul;" he deprives himself of inestimable good, and he makes himself the victim of deep and lasting evil. The children of Judah in Babylon had often occasion to say, "We suffer because we sinned against the Lord." This is the explanation of the tribulation and distress, of the darkness and the death, of the human world.

II. AS A PURGATION. God meant that Babylonian captivity to be a fiery trial which should burn up the large measure of "wood, hay, and stubble" in the character of the Jews that needed to be consumed. Strange it may seem to us that they should learn purity of creed among the heathen; that, away from the city and the temple of God, they should acquire a taste and a love for his service and worship shown for many generations in their synagogues; that in the midst of many superstitious they should come to hate all idolatrous forms and tendencies with the utmost abhorrence. But so it was. In the land of the stranger they lost their inclination to apostatize from God; they were purged of their old folly and guilt. And what early instruction, what fuller privileges, what later experiences will not do, that Divine chastisement may accomplish. God passes us through the fiery trial to purge us of our dross, to consume our earthliness, our selfishness, our grossness, our unbelief. And in some "strange land," in some place of spiritual solitude, in conditions under which we are compelled to feel as we never felt before, to learn what we never knew before, to lay to heart what we never realized before, we leave many things behind us which are weights and hindrances, we move on to that which is before us.

III. AS A PICTURE. Of what is that exile a picture? Is it not of our spiritual distance from God? To be living in sin, in a state in which we are not reconciled unto God,—is not this the exile of the soul? For what does it mean? 1. It is *distance from God.* It is to be a long way, an increasing distance, from him, from his favour, from his likeness, from the desire to hold communion with him, and therefore from his felt presence. 2. It is *captivity.* It is to be in the hands of the enemy; it is to be where silken cords at first, and at last iron chains, of unholy habit hold us fast in a cruel and degrading bondage; where we are held fast to covetousness, or to vanity, or to procrastination, or even to some dishonouring vice. 3. It is *unsatisfiedness* or even misery of soul. In that "strange land" these exiles could not sing "the Lord's song;" they "wept when they remembered Zion." Spiritual exile is joylessness of soul; unreconciled to him, there can be no "joy and rejoicing in him" or in his holy service. But let us bless God that away in this saddest exile we have not to wait until an appointed term is fulfilled, or until some Cyrus issues a proclamation (ver. 22); we may hear, if we will listen, the voice of One who *does* indeed rule over "all the kingdoms of the earth" (ver. 23), who is ever saying to us, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." We may hear the blessed words of him who never ceases to address the generations of men, saying, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." We may learn of that Divine Teacher that whoever comes back from the "far country" of sin, and seeks the heavenly Father's mercy, shall find the most cordial welcome he could hope to meet, and be taken back at once to all the love and to all the freedom of the Father's home.—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*Jehoahaz; or, three months of royalty.* I. ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND. (Ver. 1.) 1. *In his father's stead.* When Necho had defeated Josiah, instead of turning back to seize Jerusalem, which was virtually in his power, he pushed forward on his first intended march towards the Euphrates. Accordingly, on Josiah's death, Josiah's second son, Shallum, "He who shall be requited" (Jer. xxii. 11)—a name of evil omen (2 Kings xv. 13)—was called to the throne under the name Jehoahaz, "He whom Jehovah sustains." Like his predecessor of the same name, Ahaz the son of Jotham (ch. xxviii. 1), he failed to follow in the steps of his pious father, and rather, like the earlier untheocratic kings, surrendered himself to the practice of idolatry under the guidance of the heathen party in the state (2 Kings xxiii. 32). According to Josephus, he was "an impious man, and impure in his course of life" ('Ant.,' x. 5. 2). Most likely it was he whom Ezekiel described as "a young lion that learned to catch the prey and devoured men, but, as soon as the nations heard of him, he was taken in their pit, and brought with hooks into the land of Egypt" (xix. 3, 4). 2. *Over his elder brother.* As Eliakim was twenty-five years when he began to reign (ver. 5), it is obvious he was older than Shallum, who must, therefore, have been elevated to the throne by the voice of the people. As Shallum was not the legitimate heir, he was anointed (2 Kings xxiii. 30)—a custom usual in the case of founders of new dynasties

(2 Kings ix. 3). He may have been preferred to his brother Eliakim on account of his ferocious character and supposed warlike qualities (Keil), or because Eliakim was at the time beyond their reach, having probably taken part in the battle of Megiddo and been made a prisoner (Rawlinson).

II. Deposed by the King of Egypt. (Ver. 3.) 1. *After a short reign.* Only three brief months was he allowed to retain the regal dignity. The other Shallum's time of glory was still shorter. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* 2. *At the request of his brother.* This, at least, is not improbable. As Necho was not far distant, viz. at Riblath, in the land of Hamath (2 Kings xxiii. 33), the party favourable to Eliakim, the legitimate heir, may have craved his help against the usurper. 3. *By means of treachery.* The language of Ezekiel (xix. 3, 4) seems to imply that he was caught by guile, entrapped by stratagem. That Necho actually returned from Riblah with part of his forces, besieged and captured Jerusalem (Keil), is doubtful, and is not required by the language of the Chronicler (ver. 3). It is more likely that Jehoahaz was either expressly summoned by Necho (Josephus), or treacherously enticed into visiting the camp at Riblah (Ewald), where he was thrown into chains and so deposed. 4. *With the imposition of a fine upon the land.* "A hundred talents of silver," equivalent to £34,200, and "a talent of gold," equivalent to £5475, were exacted in tribute, and as a pledge of fealty to Egypt.

III. Succeeded by his father's son. (Ver. 4.) 1. *Whose right was vindicated.* The throne belonged to him by right of primogeniture. 2. *Whose name was changed.* Called Eliakim, "Whom God establishes," he was designated, on acceding to the kingdom, Jehoiakim, "Jehovah has set up." 3. *Whose throne was secured.* The usurper being deported to Egypt, where he died (2 Kings xxiii. 34), removed the likelihood at least of civil strife.

IV. Lamented by a prophet of Jehovah. Jeremiah (xxii. 10—12) probably only gave expression to the feelings of regard cherished by Jehoahaz's subjects, who mourned: 1. *For their own disappointed hopes.* During his short reign he had pleased the people, caught the popular imagination, and excited in them expectations of being able to revive the faded glories and upraise the fallen fortunes of Judæa. But now these anticipations were scattered to the winds. 2. *For his melancholy fate.* This seemed worse than what had threatened to befall Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 1; Isa. xxxviii. 10)—to be cut off in the middle of his days; worse even than what had overtaken his illustrious father—death upon the battle-field (ch. xxxv. 23, 24). No king of Judah had before been carried off into hopeless exile. Manasseh had, indeed, been deported to Babylon (ch. xxxiii. 11), but had afterwards been restored to his crown and kingdom (ch. xxxiii. 20). In the case of Jehoahaz no such alleviation of his misery could be looked for. Jehovah's word, through Jeremiah, was the death-stroke to any such expectation: "He shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more."

Learn: 1. The strange vicissitudes of mortal life. 2. The miseries of many kings—a check to ambition. 3. The certainty of God's Word.—W.

Vers. 5—8.—*The fortunes of Jehoiakim.* I. A new king upon the throne of Judah. (Ver. 5.) 1. *His designation.* Eliakim, "Whom God establishes," changed into Jehoiakim, "Jehovah has set up;" not by himself (Cheyne, 'Jeremiah: his Life and Times,' p. 142), though it would almost seem as if Uzziah had adopted that name instead of Azariah on acceding to the crown (ch. xxvi. 1), and Pul had assumed the title Tiglath-Pileser, "Adar is my confidence," on succeeding Shalmaneser of Assyria (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 126); but by Necho II. (ver. 4; 2 Kings xxiii. 34), as Mattaniah's name was changed into Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxiv. 17); which statements may be harmonized by supposing that "Necho and Nebuchadnezzar treated the vassal kings appointed by them not altogether as slaves, but permitted them to choose themselves the new names, which they only confirmed in token of their supremacy" (Keil). 2. *His lineage.* The son of Josiah and of Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah, supposed to be identical with Arumah, near Shechem (2 Kings xxiii. 36). Jehoahaz, whom he succeeded, was his younger brother by a different mother, Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (2 Kings xxiii. 31). 3. *His accession.* (1) As to time, when he was twenty-five years of age, which shows he must have been born in his father's fourteenth year. (2) As to means, by the help of Necho II., who deposed his usurping brother (ver. 3), partly perhaps because he was a usurper, but partly also, it may be assumed, because the people had elected that brother without having first obtained Necho's consent. (3) As to title, he was Josiah's eldest son, and therefore the crown prince and legal heir to the throne. 4. *His character.* Bad; modelled upon that of Ahab rather than of Josiah (Jer. xxii. 15, reading of two Septuagint manuscripts, adopted by Cheyne). (1) Idolatrous: "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (ver. 5), as his half-brother had done (2 Kings xxiii. 32). "He devoted himself with his whole soul to the heathen party, reintroduced all the foreign rites formerly extirpated by Josiah, and added the Egyptian to their number" (Ewald), of which the amplest proof appears in the prophets (Jer. vii. 9, etc.; xvii. 2; xix. 4, 5; Ezek. viii. 9—17). (2) Violent; in this respect like his brother, compared to a young lion who learnt to catch the prey and devoured men (Ezek. xix. 5, 6; cf. Jer. xxii. 17); the worst examples of his violence being his murder of Urijah the prophet, whom he fetched out of Egypt and slew (Jer. xxvi. 22), and his burning of Jeremiah's roll, accompanied with an order to arrest the prophet (Jer. xxxvi. 23, 26). (3) Luxurious; he strove to excel in cedar, by building for himself a costly palace of ample proportions, with spacious chambers and large windows, ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion (Jer. xxii. 14, 15). "At another time certainly no one could have blamed Jehoiakim and his nobles for being discontented with the narrow, ill-lighted chambers of Syrian houses; but was this the moment for beautifying Jerusalem when the land was still groaning under Necho's war-fine?" (Cheyne, 'Jeremiah: his Life and Times,' p. 141). (4) Exacting; grinding the faces of his people with severe taxation to pay the tribute to Pharaoh (2 Kings xxiii. 33), and cheating of their hard-earned wages the very labourers who built his palace (Jer. xxii. 13). (5) Licentious; abandoning himself to lewdness (Ezek. xix. 7, margin; 1 Esdr. i. 42). In short, "he remained fixed in the recollections of his countrymen as the last example of those cruel, selfish, luxurious princes, the natural product of Oriental monarchies, the disgrace of the monarchy of David" (Stanley). 5. *His reign.* Eleven years. Too long for any good it wrought. Judah could hardly have fared worse, had he been uncrowned after three months, as his brother had been. 6. *His death.* Accounts vary. (1) The Chronicler does not make it clear whether he was carried to Babylon or not. If he was (Dan. i. 2; 1 Esdr. i. 40, LXX.), he was probably, like Manasseh (ch. xxxiii. 13), permitted after a time to return to his own land (Keil, Bertheau, Jamieson), since (2) according to 2 Kings (xxiv. 6), Jehoiakim "slept with his fathers," and, according to the LXX., "was buried in the garden of Uzzah." The addendum of the LXX. is obviously non-authentic, and the statement of Scripture seems contradicted by (3) passages in Jeremiah, which say that Jehoiakim should be "buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (xxii. 19), and that his dead body should be "cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost" (xxxvi. 30). The reconciliation, however, of the seeming discrepancy is easy. He may have been slain by the hand of an assassin, and his dead body thereupon cast out unburied (Cheyne); or "he may have perished in a battle with some one of the irregular marauding bands who, according to 2 Kings xxiv. 2, came against him" (Keil, Bähr), and his corpse been left to rot upon the battle-field; or, after being first executed by Nebuchadnezzar and buried with the burial of an ass, his bones may have been collected and interred in the sepulchre of Manasseh (Rawlinson).

II. A NEW ENEMY AT THE GATE OF JERUSALEM. (Ver. 6.) 1. *His person.* Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. xxi. 2), Nabuchodonosor (LXX.), in the inscriptions *Nabû-kudurri-usur*, meaning "Nebo protect the crown." 2. *His descent.* A son of Nabopolassar, a general of Sarak, the last King of Nineveh (Ewald), perhaps the viceroy of Babylon (Cheyne). On the fall of Nineveh he founded the new Babylonian empire (B.C. 625—610). 3. *His title.* King of Babylon. Hitherto the enemies of Jerusalem and Judah had been kings of Egypt (ch. xii. 2; xxxvi. 3) or of Assyria (ch. xxviii. 20; xxxii. 1, 2); now it is a King of Babylon. According to the canon of Ptolemy, Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne in B.C. 604; according to Berosus, while crown prince he was, in B.C. 605, despatched by his father "to crush a revolt of the western provinces," in which he was entirely successful, having conquered Syria and Phœnicia as well as Egypt. 4. *His invasion.* According to Daniel, this occurred in

Jehoiakim's third year (Dan. i. 1), the year before Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho at Carchemish (Jer. xxv. 1; xlvi. 2), *i.e.* B.C. 606. The probability is that, either before or immediately after defeating Necho, he proceeded to Jerusalem and received the submission of Jehoiakim, who had up till that time been Necho's vassal. In order to secure this transference of Jehoiakim's allegiance, he appears to have both taken the city and put its sovereign in chains, as if, should he prove refractory, to deport him to Babylon, but to have departed from this design on obtaining promise of Jehoiakim's fealty. This, however, Jehoiakim only kept for three years (2 Kings xxiv. 1), at the end of which he rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar, being occupied with affairs in Babylon, having acceded to the throne only two years prior to Jehoiakim's revolt, despatched against the rebel several detachments of troops, "bands of Chaldeans," at the same time stirring up the Ammonites, Syrians, and Moabites to harass Judah (2 Kings xxiv. 2), but not himself returning to Jerusalem till five years later, in the reign of Jehoiachin.

III. A NEW SPOLIATION OF JEHOVAH'S TEMPLE. (Ver. 7.) 1. *The first plundering of the sacred edifice.* (1) By whom? Shishak (Sheshonk) King of Egypt. (2) When? In the fifth year of Rehoboam, B.C. 971. (3) To what extent? Total: "He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord: he took all" (ch. xii. 9; 1 Kings xiv. 26). 2. *The second plundering of the sacred edifice.* (1) The despoiler. Ahaz King of Judah. (2) The time. B.C. 734, during the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion. (3) The reason. To purchase therewith the help of Tiglath-Pileser II. against Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Samaria (ch. xxviii. 21). 3. *The third plundering of the sacred edifice.* (1) The agent. Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz. (2) The act. He took "all the silver found in the house of the Lord . . . and the gold from the doors and pillars of the temple" (2 Kings xviii. 15, 16). (3) The object. To give to Sennacherib King of Assyria as tribute-money. (4) The date. When Sennacherib was encamped at Lachish, B.C. 701. 4. *The fourth plundering of the sacred edifice.* (1) The person. Nebuchadnezzar, called King of Babylon, though at the time only crown-prince. (2) The extent. Partial: "He carried off the vessels of the house of the Lord." Jeremiah (xxvii. 18, 20) predicted that the vessels which had been left would one day be carried to Babylon, and would remain there until the return from captivity, when they should again be restored to their place in the temple (cf. ver. 18; Dan. v. 2; Ezra i. 7). (3) The cause. To punish Judah as well as Jehoiakim, and to ensure their fealty. (4) The aggravation. The pillaged vessels were transported to Babylon and deposited in "his temple," or "treasure house of his god" (Dan. i. 2; 1 Esdr. i. 41), rather than "his palace" (Bertheau). The inscriptions show that Marduk, or Merodach, was Nebuchadnezzar's patron divinity, that Nebuchadnezzar's temple was the temple of Merodach at Babylon, which he completely built and restored, and that Nebuchadnezzar himself was, according to his ideas, intensely religious, even calling himself "the heaven-adoring king" ('Records,' etc., v. 113, etc.; vii. 75, etc.).

LESSONS. 1. The native corruption of the human heart, attested by the wicked characters of Josiah's sons. 2. The impossibility of going on in sin with impunity.—W.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Jehoiachin the worthless.* I. HIS CORONATION. 1. *His title to the throne.* He was Jehoiakim's son, his mother having been Nehushta, "The Brazen," the daughter of El-nathan of Jerusalem (ver. 8; 2 Kings xxiv. 6, 8), one of the princes attached to Jehoiakim's court (Jer. xxvi. 22; xxxvi. 12, 25). 2. *His regal designation.* Jehoiachin, "Jehovah has established," perhaps expressive of the hopes with which he assumed the sceptre. His personal name appears to have been "Coniah" (Jer. xxii. 24, 28), or Jeconiah (1 Chron. iii. 16), also signifying "Jehovah establishes." 3. *His age at accession.* Eight years (ver. 9), obviously a mistake for eighteen (2 Kings xxiv. 8), since he had wives (2 Kings xxiv. 15), and in Jeremiah is represented as a man, while, if Ezekiel (xix. 5—9) refers to him rather than Jehoiakim, the language in ver. 7 is hardly suitable as applied to an infant or child of eight. 4. *His continuance upon the throne.* Three months and ten days—ten days longer than his uncle Jehoahaz (ver. 2), and "just as long as Napoleon's after his landing in March, 1815" (Cheyne). Another illustration of short-lived glory. *Vanitas vanitatum!*

II. HIS CHARACTER. 1. *As a man.* He was obviously no better than his father, in whose footsteps he walked. His father's wickedness allured more than his father's evil fortunes repelled him. Jehovah's withering scorn of Coniah as "a despised and broken pot," "a vessel wherein is no pleasure" (Jer. xxii. 28; cf. xlviii. 38), significantly intimates the esteem in which he was held by him who tries the hearts and reins alike of kings and common men; while the relentless doom pronounced upon "this man" and "his seed" was a clear certification that the stock from which he sprang was incurably diseased, that the taint of vileness in the family was ineradicable, that he and his descendants were only fit to be cast out and trodden in the mire (Matt. v. 13; Luke xiv. 34). 2. *As a king.* "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (ver. 9). He had no power, even had he possessed the inclination, to arrest the downward progress of his nation. By personal preference as well as by official position he was bound neck and heels to the heathen party to which his mother Nehushta belonged, and which sought neither the prosperity nor the safety of their land and kingdom in maintaining the pure worship of Jehovah, but in serving Canaanitish, Phœnician, Egyptian, Assyrian, or Babylonian idols, whichever should at any time be thought most likely to serve their turn.

III. HIS CAPTIVITY. 1. *The reason.* Not stated by either the Chronicler or the author of Kings, this may have been suspicion of Jehoiachin's fidelity (Rawlinson, 'Kings of Israel and Judah,' p. 231), or knowledge of Egyptian troops advancing to the aid of Jerusalem (Cheyne, 'Jeremiah: his Life and Times,' p. 162). 2. *The time.* At the return of the year (ver. 10), *i.e.* in springtime, when kings were accustomed to go forth to battle (2 Sam. xi. 1). The year was the eighth of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (2 Kings xxiv. 12), or B.C. 597. 3. *The manner.* (2 Kings xxiv. 10—15.) (1) Nebuchadnezzar despatched his generals to besiege Jerusalem. (2) Afterwards Nebuchadnezzar himself appeared in front of the city. (3) Jehoiachin, accompanied by his mother, his wives, his servants, his princes, his officers, went out to make submission and surrender the city to Nebuchadnezzar, in the hope doubtless of being permitted, like Jehoiakim, to retain his kingdom as a vassal of Babylon. This, however, was not accorded him. (4) Nebuchadnezzar made him prisoner and carried him off to Babylon, as Jeremiah (xxii. 25) had some time before predicted he would do. (5) In addition, Nebuchadnezzar carried off his mother, his wives, his officers, the chief men of the land, amongst whom was Ezekiel (i. 1, 2), even ten thousand captives, with seven thousand men of might, and a thousand craftsmen and smiths—"a sad mitigation of his lot indeed, but one for which Jehoahaz might have envied him. All that was best and worthiest in the old capital city went with Jehoiachin to Babylon" (Cheyne, 'Jeremiah,' etc., p. 162). (6) Only the poorest sort of people were left in the land, with the king's uncle Mattanias, or Zedekiah, as king. (7) The temple and palace were on this occasion completely plundered. "The goodly vessels of the house of the Lord" (ver. 10), *i.e.* the larger articles—the smaller ones having been previously taken (ver. 7)—were transported to Babylon. 4. *The duration.* Thirty-seven years. Then, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of the year, Evil-Merodach (in the inscriptions *Avil-Marduk*, signifying "Man of Marduk" or "Merodach"), on coming to the throne after Nebuchadnezzar's death, lifted up his head out of prison (2 Kings xxv. 27—30).

Learn: 1. The incurable character of sin, at least by any merely human means. 2. The swiftness in some cases of Divine retribution. 3. The misery entailed by sin upon evil-doers and all connected with them. 4. The evil done to religion by the wickedness of those who profess and should adorn it.—W.

Vers. 11—21.—*Zedekiah; or, the fall of Judah.* I. AN EXAMPLE OF INSENSATE WICKEDNESS. (Vers. 11—16.) 1. *On the part of the king.* Seemingly the third (1 Chron. iii. 15), but in reality the fourth, son of Josiah (cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 31, 36), and the full brother of Jehoahaz, or Shallum (2 Kings xxiii. 31; xxiv. 18), but the half-brother of Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiii. 36), Mattanias, or "Jehovah's gift," as he was originally called, ascended the throne of Judah in his twenty-first year, by the favour of Nebuchadnezzar his overlord (ver. 10). With his superior's consent, like Jehoiakim, he adopted of his own accord, or had chosen for him by others (Cheyne), a special throne-name. Zedekiah, Zidkiah, meaning "Jehovah is righteous," or "Justice of Jehovah," had been the name of a former sovereign of Ascalon, whom Sennacherib had subdued (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 291); and whatever may have been the object of Mattanias or his princes in selecting this as the designation of Judah's last king, it is hardly possible not to be struck with its singular propriety. To a people who were frequently instructed by "signs" it was a double symbol—first by way of contrast of the utter corruption of the nation, both prince and people; and second by way of prediction of coming doom for the kingdom. So far as the king was concerned, it was a grim satire on holy things to designate a creature like him Zedekiah. If his person and character were remarkable for anything, it was for the absence of righteousness. (1) His devotion to idols was intense. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord his God" (ver. 12), by adhering to the heathen worship of his predecessors (2 Kings xxiv. 19; Jer. lii. 2). (2) His unbelief was pronounced. He refused to believe Jeremiah the prophet speaking to him in Jehovah's name (Jer. xxxvii. 2). (3) His disobedience was flagrant. He rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear (allegiance) by God (ver. 13; cf. 2 Kings xxiv. 20; Ezek. xvii. 13—19)—a wickedness for which Jehovah declared he should die in Babylon. The reason of this revolt was the accession of a new Pharaoh, Hophrah in Scripture (Jer. xliv. 30), in the hieroglyphic inscriptions *Uahibri*, Οὐαφρῆ in the LXX., Ἀπρίης, or Apries, in Herodotus (ii. 161, 169; iv. 159). To him Zedekiah, against Jeremiah's advice, despatched ambassadors, hoping to obtain "horses and much people" (Ezek. xvii. 15). Nebuchadnezzar at once took the field, uncertain whether to march against Egypt or Jerusalem. By means of divination he decided for Jerusalem (Ezek. xxi. 20—22). In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar with his armies sat down before Jerusalem (2 Kings xxv. 1). Hearing, however, of Pharaoh-Hophra's approach, he raised the siege (Jer. xxxvii. 5). This having excited false hopes as to Nebuchadnezzar's final withdrawal from the city (Ezek. xvii. 17), Jeremiah warned king and people that he would soon return (Jer. xxxvii. 8—10). This warning Zedekiah would not hear (ch. xxxvi. 16). 2. *On the part of the people.* Hardly second to their monarch were the priests, the princes, and the people. (1) Their passion for idolatry was as great: "They trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the heathen" (ver. 14). "Like priest, like people"—a proverb applicable to kings and subjects, masters and servants, as well as ecclesiastics and worshippers. (2) Their insolence was as high: "They polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem" (ver. 14). "Jeremiah (xxiii. 11) alludes to practices specially inconsistent with the holy place, and one of the Jewish captives explains what they were (Ezek. viii. 11—17). There was (*a*) an image of Asherah; (*b*) totemistic animal-emblems on the wall of a temple-chamber; (*c*) weeping for 'Tammuz yearly wounded;' (4) sun-worship and the rite of holding up 'the twig' to the nose" (Cheyne, 'Jeremiah: his Life,' etc., pp. 166, 167). (3) Their unbelief was as daring. Though Jehovah had "sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending them," yet had they "mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets" (vers. 15, 16)—a degree of criminality beyond that of which the Israelites had been guilty when they laughed Hezekiah's messengers to scorn (ch. xxx. 10), but not above that which hearers of the gospel may incur (Acts ii. 13; xvii. 32; Heb. x. 29; 2 Pet. ii. 3, 4; Jude 18).

II. AN INSTANCE OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION. (Vers. 17—21.) The moral and spiritual corruption of the community in Zedekiah's time was so great that nothing remained but to pour out upon them the vials of long-threatened wrath (Deut. xxviii. 21, 36, 52; xxxi. 16—21; Jer. v. 19; xxxii. 28—36). In the expressive language of the Chronicler, "there was no remedy," "no healing," more; nothing but fire and sword. After defeating Pharaoh-Hophra, or causing him to retreat, Nebuchadnezzar returned to his head-quarters at Riblah, on the east bank of the Orontes, thirty-five miles north-east of Baalbec, and despatched his captains, Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Rab-mag, and others to resume the siege of Jerusalem, which, however, triumphantly withstood their assaults until the beginning of the eleventh year, when the supply of provisions began to fail (Jer. lii. 6). On the ninth day of the fourth month, *i.e.* in July, B.C. 586, "there was no bread for the people of the land." The starving defenders of the city could no longer hold out. The horrors of the situation may be gathered from Lam. ii. 19; iv. 3—10; Ezek. v. 10; Baruch ii. 3. The besiegers eventually effected a breach in the north wall, and poured in like a destroying flood. Then ensued: 1. *Merciless carnage.* The Chaldean soldiers butchered all and sundry, young and old, lad and maiden, not even sparing such as had taken refuge in the temple (ver. 17). The massacre was wholesale, truculent, and pitiless, eclipsed in horror only by that which took place when Jerusalem was captured by Titus (Josephus, 'Wars,' vi. 9. 4). 2. *Ruthless sacrilege.* They completely despoiled the temple of its sacred vessels, great and small, as well as pillaged the royal palaces, carrying off their treasures (ver. 18). Among the articles removed from the temple were the brazen and golden utensils of service, the two pillars, the brazen sea, and the vases which Solomon had made (2 Kings xxv. 13—17; Jer. lii. 17—23). 3. *Wholesale destruction.* "They burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces" (ver. 19); which was pure vandalism. This appears to have been done not on the night of the city's capture (tenth day of tenth month), but seven months after, on the tenth day of the fifth month, *i.e.* in February, B.C. 587 (Jer. lii. 12), and to have been carried out by one of Nebuchadnezzar's generals, Nebuzar-adan, captain of the king's guards, or "chief of the executioners" (cf. Gen. xxxix. 1), despatched from Riblah for the purpose. What happened in the interval is narrated in 2 Kings (xxv. 4—7) and Jeremiah (lii. 7—11), viz. the capture, near Jericho, of Zedekiah with his court and his forces, who had escaped when the city was taken, and their journey north to Riblah, the head-quarters of Nebuchadnezzar, where, after judgment held (2 Kings xxv. 6), Zedekiah's sons and the princes of Judah were slain, and Zedekiah himself blinded according to an inhuman practice of the time (see 'Records,' etc., iii. 50, l. 117, "Of many soldiers I destroyed the eyes;" and comp. Herod., vii. 18), and cast into bonds preparatory to being deported to Babylon. In Babylon he was cast into prison until the day of his death (Jer. lii. 11); according to tradition, his work in prison was that of grinding in a mill like an ordinary slave (Ewald, 'History of Israel,' iv. 273, note 5). 4. *Pitiless expatriation.* Those that had escaped the sword were driven off, like gangs of slaves, to become exiles in a strange land, and servants to the kings of Babylon, "until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths," viz. for three score and ten years (vers. 20, 21). Such transplantations of conquered populations were common in the ancient Orient. "Sargon transported the Samaritans to Gozan and Media; Sennacherib carried off two hundred thousand Jews from Judæa; Esarhaddon placed Elamites, Susianians, and Babylonians in Samaria. Darius Hystaspis brought the nation of the Pæonians from Europe into Asia Minor, removed the Barcæans to Bactria, and the Eretrians to Ardericca near Susa" (Rawlinson, 'Egypt and Babylon,' pp. 45, 46).

LESSONS. 1. The incorrigible character of some sinners. 2. The offensiveness in God's sight of pride and hardiness of heart. 3. The heinousness of oath-breaking and of unjustifiable rebellion. 4. The hopelessness of reformation in a city or a land when all classes are in love with wicked ways. 5. The infinite compassion of God towards the worst of men. 6. The certainty that mercy despised will turn into wrath displayed. 7. The pitiless character of Heaven's judgments upon them for whom there is no remedy. 8. The indifference God shows towards the external symbols of religion when the inner spirit is wanting. 9. The impossibility of God's Word failing.—W.

Vers. 22, 23.—*Cyrus of Persia; or, the return of the exiles.* I. THE GREAT DELIVERER. (Ver. 22.) 1. *Foretold in Scripture.* (1) That his name should be Cyrus. (2) That he should come from the East. (3) That he should be a mighty conqueror, subduing nations and dethroning kings. (4) That he should overthrow Babylon, and become the sovereign of the empire of that name. (5) That he should liberate the captive Jews in that city and empire. (6) That he should issue orders or grant permission for the rebuilding of both the city and the temple of Jerusalem. (7) That in doing all this he should act (whether consciously or unconsciously is not stated) under the immediate guidance and direct superintendence of Jehovah (Isa. xli. 2; xliv. 28; xlv. 1—5; xlvi. 11; xlviii. 14, 15). 2. *Raised up in history.* (1) He was called Cyrus, in Hebrew *Coresh* (ver. 22; Ezra i. 1), in the inscriptions *K'ur'us* and *Ku-ra-as* (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' p. 372). (2) He came from the East, being named in sacred history (ver. 22; Ezra i. 1; iv. 3; Dan. vi. 28), as well as in profane (Herod., ix. 122; Xen., 'Cyr.,' viii. ii. 7), King of Persia, though the monuments now show that he was originally King of Elam, on the east of Persia (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., pp. 168, etc.). (3) First he conquered Astyages the Median, who had marched against him in the sixth year of Nabonidus King of Babylon. Next, before the ninth year of Nabonidus, he must have acquired the sovereignty of Persia, as in that year he calls himself "King of Persia." (4) In the month Nisan (March), of the ninth year of Nabonidus, Cyrus marched his troops into Accad, or Northern Babylonia. In the tenth year Erech was captured. In the eleventh the situation remained *in statu quo*. In the seventeenth year, in the month of Tammuz (July), Cyrus encountered the army of Accad in the town of Rutum, upon the river Nizallat, when the soldiers of Nabonidus broke into revolt. On the fourteenth day the garrison of Sippara surrendered, while Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth the governor of Gutium (Kurdistan) marched the troops of Cyrus into Babylon without requiring to strike a blow. Nabonidus, subsequently captured, was cast into fetters in Babylon. Whether the siege of Babylon described by Herodotus (iii. 158, 159) was this of Cyrus (Budge), or a later one of Darius Hystaspis (Sayce), need not here be determined; it is sufficient to note that after this Cyrus assumed the title "King of Babylon" (Ezra v. 13) in addition to his other titles—"King of Persia and King of Elam." (5) The clay cylinder of Cyrus contains "a reference to the restoration of the Babylonian captives to their several homes. The experience of Cyrus had taught him that the old Assyrian and Babylonian system of transporting conquered nations was an error, and did but introduce a dangerously disaffected people into the country to which they had been brought" (Sayce, ibid.). (6) "Those who chose to return to Jerusalem were allowed to do so, and there rebuild a fortress, which Cyrus considered would be useful to him as a check upon Egypt" (Sayce). (7) In the Cyrus cylinder it is said, "Merodach sought out a king for himself who would perform according to the heart's desire of the god whatever was entrusted to him. He proclaimed the renown of Cyrus the King of Anzan [Elam, Sayce; Persia, Budge] throughout the length and breadth of the land. . . . Merodach, the great lord, directed his (Cyrus's) hand and heart" (Budge, 'Babylonian Life,' etc., pp. 80, 81).

II. THE CHEERING PROCLAMATION. (Ver. 23.) 1. *Its date.* The first year of Cyrus, *i.e.* the first year of his reign as King of Babylon, *i.e.* B.C. 538 (Canon of Ptolemy). 2. *Its cause.* The stirring up of his heart by Jehovah. Though the monuments have shown that Cyrus was not a monotheist, but a polytheist, they have also made it manifest that he considered himself as under the immediate guidance of Heaven in the taking of Babylon; and hence, it may be assumed, also in the liberation of the captives. That he was powerfully persuaded of the propriety of such an action, and regarded his impulse in that direction as "from Heaven," is apparent. The sacred writer states that the true source of that inspiration was Jehovah. Cyrus believed it to be Merodach. 3. *Its design.* To fulfil the Word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah (xxix. 10), that after seventy years the captives should be restored. This was Jehovah's design, not Cyrus's—concerning which see above. That the seventy years, in round numbers, were accomplished, can be seen from an easy calculation. Dating from B.C. 599, the year of Jehoiachin's captivity, and setting down the first year of Cyrus as B.C. 538, the interval is only sixty-one years; but if the period of the exile be dated from the third (Dan. i. 1) or the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. xxv. 1—12), *i.e.* B.C. 606, then the interval from Jeremiah's prediction to Cyrus's proclamation will be sixty-eight years, or sixty-nine inclusive, which, with the months that elapsed before the first company of exiles settled in Palestine (Ezra iii. 1), will practically make seventy years. Or the prophetic year may be taken as consisting of 360 days; in which case 360 × 70 = 25,200 days = 69 years of 365 days. 4. *Its form.* (1) Vocal; being probably proclaimed by means of heralds (cf. ch. xxx. 5, 6). (2) Written; being most likely set forth in two languages—Persian and Chaldee. 5. *Its contents.* (1) A devout acknowledgment of Heaven's grace. "All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me" (ver. 23; Ezra i. 1), the term "Jehovah" being employed in the Hebrew copy instead of "Ormazd" in the Persian. Persian sovereigns were accustomed to speak of the Supreme Being as the God of heaven (Ezra vi. 9, 10; vii. 12, 23), and to recognize their dependence on him for their earthly power, an inscription of Darius saying, "Then the land was mine, and the other lands which Ormazd has given into my hand. I conquered them by the grace of Ormazd" ('Records,' etc., ix. 68). And the cylinder of Cyrus stating, "Cyrus King of Elam, he (Merodach) proclaimed by name for sovereignty; all men everywhere commemorate his name" (Sayce, 'Fresh Light,' etc., p. 172). (2) A hearty submission to Divine will. "He hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah." According to Josephus ('Ant.,' xi. 1. 2), Cyrus learnt the Divine will concerning himself by reading Isaiah's prophecy (xliv. 28); but as Cyrus, whether a polytheist (Sayce) or a monotheist (Budge), was extremely tolerant to all religions, and as on capturing Babylon he immediately proceeded to restore the shrines of the Babylonian gods, he may have conceived himself as called upon by Jehovah to do the same thing for the Jews in Palestine. (3) An earnest inquiry after Jehovah's people. "Who is there among you of all his people?" The proclamation was not limited to the Judahites, but extended to all worshippers of Jehovah—to those who had been carried captive from both kingdoms. (4) A free permission to return to Jerusalem. "Let him go up." "Jerusalem was on a much higher level than Babylonia, and the travellers would consequently have to ascend considerably" ('Pulpit Commentary on Ezra,' i. 3). (5) A solemn benediction on those who availed themselves of his permission. "The Lord his God be with him." The expression of this wish or prayer corresponded with the mild and benevolent character of Cyrus.

LESSONS. 1. The ability of God to fulfil his promises no less than his threatenings. 2. The secret access which God has to the hearts of men—of kings no less than of common men. 3. The certainty that God can raise up at any moment a fitting instrument to do his will.—W.

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